

The Soviet Partisan Movement 1941–1944



Leonid Grenkevich

Edited and with a foreword by
David M. Glantz

CASS SERIES ON SOVIET (RUSSIAN) MILITARY EXPERIENCE

THE SOVIET PARTISAN MOVEMENT
1941–1944

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THE SOVIET PARTISAN MOVEMENT 1941–1944

A Critical Historiographical Analysis

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Edited and with a Foreword by
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Foreword

As mankind approaches the new millennium, it does so filled with fresh hope and optimism that it can forever banish the multiple horrors that have afflicted it in the past. Renewed faith abounds that science, technology, and simple enlightened reason can banish the unholy trinity of war, disease, and hunger that have exacted so terrible a toll on countless generations of our ancestors. Whether mankind can resist and even reverse these seemingly inevitable plagues on humanity remains to be seen. What is clear, however, is that knowledge and understanding of the nature of these more sordid dimensions of history is a necessary precondition for their ultimate elimination. Nowhere is this clearer than in the realm of warfare.

If, in fact, history is a teacher of lessons that can be learned, the twentieth century has excelled in a didactic manner by exposing the full dimensions and consequences of large-scale conventional warfare. The first half of the century saw mankind engulfed in 'total war', whose ferocity and consequences were unprecedented. Man apparently learned harsh lessons from its experiences with 'total war' and applied them as the century progressed. The second half of the century produced 40 years of 'Cold War' in which the world's population was held hostage by the grim spectre of nuclear conflict and the vivid memories of the damage 'total war' could produce. The armed peace that characterised the Cold War clearly demonstrated that this understanding combined with sheer nuclear intimidation could successfully deter renewed global conflict. However, history found its escape from the seemingly unnatural state of peace by afflicting mankind with new sorts of conflicts, variously termed 'limited war', 'unconventional war', 'guerrilla war', 'ethnic conflict', and the more amorphous but no less deadly phenomenon of international terrorism. To date, mankind has not yet developed an understanding of these new types of conflicts necessary to escape their

effects. This then becomes one of the pre-eminent challenges of the twenty-first century.

Among the panoply of new conflicts, guerrilla or partisan war occupies a unique position. It has been a ubiquitous phenomenon afflicting virtually all nations and regions. Colonial powers felt its sting early on and could not cope with it. Nor did recognised might prevail against the guerrilla. Despite their recognised military prowess and vaunted status as the world's two superpowers, both the United States and the Soviet Union confronted and were confounded by guerrilla war, the former in Vietnam and the latter in Afghanistan. Lesser states face even greater peril from guerrilla war, for, in many cases, guerrilla movements threaten their very viability and survival. Columbia in Latin America, a host of African nations, Cambodia in Asia, and countless other nations now face this amorphous but deadly danger as the forces of ethnicity, religiosity, and nationalism reduced to the lowest common denominator find expression and legitimacy in guerrilla warfare. Nor should traditional, seemingly monolithic, nations remain confident they can escape its scourge in the future.

If it is true that knowledge precedes understanding, and understanding, in turn, is critical to coping with or escaping from the threat of guerrilla warfare, then we have made modest beginnings. A plethora of authors have addressed the subject from both a practical and a theoretical perspective, and their work has provided an admirable framework outlining the parameters of the problem. As is often the case, however, the devil is in the detail, and, in many instances, requisite detail has been absent, perverted, or warped by the proximity of the events being studied. In no realm has this been clearer than in the subject of this book – the partisan struggle in the Soviet Union during the Second World War.

The Soviet partisan movement has attracted keen attention at home in Russia and its component and descendant republics as well as abroad. That attention, however, has been severely flawed. Western authors relied on German archival records and the vivid recollections of German veterans to paint an imperfect mosaic of that shadowy struggle as perceived by those who were victimised by it. Understandably, interpretations vary from those who dreaded the partisans' seeming omnipresence to those who dismissed partisan actions as nothing more than the unpleasantness of having a 'red louse in one's hide', as one veteran termed it. German-based sources have done a good job exploiting the victims' archival holdings to portray as accurate a picture as possible of

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the nature and consequences of partisan war. But it is only a fragmentary and distorted mosaic.

On the other hand, a host of Soviet and Russian memoir literature has immortalised the partisan in distinctly stereotypical fashion. Driven by a mixture of ideological fervour and hatred of a dreaded enemy, the typical partisan warrior, male, female, and child alike, suffered stoically while meting out constant and effective retribution to the foreign usurpers [*zakhvatchikov*]. The term 'usurper' itself, which is so dominant in this genre of literature, is symbolic of the mythology that has grown to envelop the ideal partisan. As astute students of military science and art, Soviet military theorists have also written article after article to explain the phenomenon of partisan war. While these works have added to our detailed knowledge of the partisan struggle, they too, quite naturally, accentuated the positive and ignored the negative. Even these authors wrote within severe archival constraints. Worse still, few in the West took the time or exerted the effort necessary to study the Soviet works. Consequently, for altogether different reasons, the Soviet mosaic was also flawed.

In this volume, Leonid Grenkevich has taken the essential first step in reconstructing the true nature and impact of the Soviet partisan war. He has begun by synthesising the best available Western and Eastern sources on the struggle. More important still, he has begun the arduous process of mining the undoubtedly immense store of archival records on that struggle to document his account and judgements. Finally, but alas almost too late, he has sought out those few remaining veterans of the partisan movement to record their recollections of the mundane everyday tasks that in combination made the struggle as effective as it was.

Quite naturally, this is not the definitive work on the subject, for that work is decades away. Nor does it represent a final appropriate memorial to all of those who suffered or perished in the struggle. It does, however, represent a formidable beginning to the imposing process of lifting the veil on the Soviet partisan struggle. Its detail and balance represents an essential first step in reconstructing a complex and hitherto-flawed mosaic. Leonid Grenkevich himself or others can now build on this sound base to examine the many-faceted movement in even greater detail and accord it its just due. In fact, given that the most serious impediment to further research is the reluctance of Russian authorities to grant access to archival materials, his volume proves how little one has to fear from the truth.

As editor of this volume, I have merely shaped Leonid's manuscript to make it more readable for an English-language audience. In essence, I have polished Leonid's carefully tailored mosaic. To underscore his rich detail, I have added a selection of maps from both German and Soviet sources. Many of these maps serve only to accentuate and illustrate the points he has already made. Further, they graphically indicate that the looming presence of the Soviet partisan movement was indeed recognised in German headquarters at every level throughout the war.

It has been gratifying to play a role, however slight, in bringing this volume to fruition. My fervent hope is that this valuable work will encourage others in the field to add their efforts to revealing more of this important yet hitherto obscure chapter in the history of twentieth-century warfare.

David M. Glantz
Carlisle, Pennsylvania

'To the question by the President [F. Roosevelt] regarding guerrilla operations, Mr Molotov [Soviet Foreign Minister] replied that the partisans were most active in the Moscow–Smolensk–Mozhaisk (Dorogobuzh) sector.

They numbered 9,000 irregulars and parts of 2–3 cavalry divisions under General Belov. They were in absolute control of an egg-shaped area measuring some 60 kilometres east and west by 20–30 kilometres north and south. They were, however, less conspicuous in other areas.'

(memorandum of conversation among Roosevelt, Molotov, and others on 30 May 1942, quoted in *Soviet Partisans in World War II*, ed. J. Armstrong, p. 390, note)

Abbreviations

BCR	Belorussian Central Rada [parliament – <i>Belorusskaia Tsentral'naia Rada</i>]
BPS	Belorussian People Self-Assistance Union
<i>BSE</i>	<i>Bol'shaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia</i> [Great Soviet encyclopaedia]
CC AUCP(B)	Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks)
CDs	'Cadets' (Constitutional Democratic Party)
CHQPD	Central Headquarters of Partisan Detachments
CHQPM	Central Headquarters [Staff] of the Partisan Movement
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CPC USSR	Council of People's Commissars of the Soviet Union
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation (US)
GKO	<i>Gosudarstvennyi komitet oborony</i> [State Defence Committee]
GRU	<i>Glavnoe razvedyvatel'noe upravlenie</i> [Main Intelligence Directorate]
<i>IKPSS</i>	<i>Istoriia kommunisticheskoi partii Sovetskogo Soiuza</i> [A history of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union]
IMF	International Monetary Fund
<i>IVMV</i>	<i>Istoriia Vtoroi Mirovoi voiny, 1939–1945</i> [A history of the Second World War, 1939–1945]
<i>IVOVSS</i>	<i>Istoriia Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny Sovetskogo Soiuza 1941–1945</i> [A history of the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union 1941–45]
JUSMAPG	Joint US Military Advisory and Planning Group
Komsomol	<i>Kommunisticheskii Soiuz Molodezhi</i> [Communist youth league]
KPB	<i>Kommunisticheskaia partiia Belorussi</i> [Belorussian Communist Party]

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MTA	(Soviet) Military Transportation Aviation
NA	<i>Natsional'nyi arkhiv</i> [National Archives of the Republic of Belarus]
NKGB	<i>Narodnyi kommissariat gosudarstvennoi bezopastnosti</i> [People's Commissariat of State Security]
NKVD	<i>Narodnyi kommissariat vnutrennikh del</i> [People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs]
OKH	German Army High Command
OKW	German Armed Forces High Command
Orgburo	Organisational Bureau of the Bolshevik Party Central Committee
OSS	Office of Strategic Services (US)
OUN	<i>Organizatsiia ukraininskikh natsionalistov</i> [Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists]
POL	petrol, oil, lubricants
PSS	<i>Polnoe sobranie sochinenii</i> (Complete Works, V. Lenin)
RCP	Russian Communist Party
ROA	<i>Rossiiskaia osvoboditel'naia armiia</i> [Russian Liberation Army]
RSDRP	<i>Russiskaia sotsialisticheskaia demokraticheskaia rabochaia partiia</i> [Russian Socialist Democratic Workers' Party]
SD	(Nazi) Security Service
SES	<i>Sovietskii entsiklopedicheskii slovar'</i> [Soviet encyclopaedic dictionary]
SMERSH	<i>Smert' shpiomam</i> ['Death to Spies!']
SOE	Special Operations Executive (British)
SRs	Social Revolutionaries
SVE	<i>Sovetskaia voennaia entsiklopediia</i> [Soviet military encyclopaedia]
TAMORF	<i>Tsentral'nyi arkhiv ministerstvo oborony Rossiiskoi Federatsii</i> [Central Archives of the Russian Federation's Ministry of Defence]
TGAOUU	<i>Tentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi arkhiv obshchestvennykh obedinenii Ukrainy</i> [Central State Archives of the Ukraine Social Union]
UPA	<i>Ukrainska Povstancha Armia</i> [Ukrainian Guerrilla Army]
VES	<i>Voennyi entsiklopedicheskii slovar'</i> [Military-encyclopaedic dictionary]
VI	<i>Voprosy istorii KPSS</i> [Questions of the history of the Communist Party]

ABBREVIATIONS

<i>VIZh</i>	<i>Voенно-istoricheskii zhurnal</i> [Military-historical journal]
<i>VKP</i>	<i>Vserossiiskaia kommunisticheskaia partiia</i> [All-Union Communist Party (Bolshevik)]
<i>VMV</i>	<i>Vtoraia Mirovaia voina</i> [The Second World War]
<i>VON</i>	<i>Velikaia Otechestvennaia Narodnaia 1941–1945</i> [Great Patriotic People 1941–1945]
<i>VOVE</i>	<i>Velikaia Otechestvennaia voina 1941–1945: Entsiklopedaia</i> [Great Patriotic War 1941–1945: An Encyclopaedia]
<i>VOVSS</i>	<i>Velikaia Otechestvennaia voina Sovetskogo Soiuz 1941–1945 Kratkaia istoriia</i> [The Great Patriotic War 1941–1945: A short history]



Map of the Partisan Movement in German-occupied territories, showing partisan-infested regions and routes of major partisan raids.

Note: symbols and numbers show estimated numbers of various types of German equipment destroyed by partisan actions.

Introduction

ORIGINS OF PARTISAN (GUERRILLA) WAR

Partisan warfare, also termed guerrilla war, has always played a rather important role in history, whether conducted on a large scale or in more limited fashion. As a form of warfare, it is a shadowy yet ubiquitous phenomenon in world history to which researchers and readers alike have been inexorably drawn. Throughout history, peoples who have permitted themselves to be subjugated for no other reason than that their armies have been incapable of offering resistance have reaped general contempt as nations of cowards. Conversely, when peoples have energetically resisted invaders by waging guerrilla warfare, invaders have found it virtually impossible to subjugate them by blood and fire. Examples of successful resistance abound, including popular opposition to the English in North America, the Napoleonic French in Spain, the Austrians in Italy and Hungary, and the German Nazis in Yugoslavia and Russia. In all of these instances, guerrilla warfare compelled would-be conquerors to treat popular resistance as a form of warfare that could and did frustrate the achievement of their final goals.

To a certain degree, from 1808–14, during the Napoleonic Wars, small-scale yet stubborn and well-organised resistance by irregular fighters, who came to be termed ‘guerrillas’, frustrated French plans to conquer Spain.

During this same period, in 1810 and 1811, the German military theorist Carl von Clausewitz delivered a series of lectures at the German War Academy in Berlin in which he articulated some of the principal goals of guerrilla warfare. Later, in his posthumously published work *On War*, he included a chapter entitled ‘Arming the Nation’, in which he concluded that one of the important factors in successful guerrilla warfare was the nature of the territory in countries where this type of fighting took place. All the while, however, he argued categorically that

guerrilla fighting alone would never produce final decisive victory in war. In short, he maintained that, to be effective, one had to conduct guerrilla warfare in combination with combat operations by regular army forces conducted in accordance with a common plan.¹

Russian experience confirmed this truism regarding the relationship between partisan units and regular forces. During the fall and winter of 1812 in Russia, Russian partisans commanded by such Patriotic War heroes as General Denis Davidoff, Colonel Kudashev, and Captains Naryshkin, Figner and Seslavin, conducted raids against units in the French rear area. These raids greatly assisted Russian Imperial Field Marshal Mikhail Kutuzov expel Napoleon's armies from Russia. Partisan forces nearly captured Napoleon himself on the banks of the Berezina River. In his subsequent *Essay on Partisan Warfare*, Davidoff analysed guerrilla tactics in Russia and concluded that partisan forces successfully operated primarily in support of regular forces and not as a force that fought on its own.² Davidoff formulated a wide range of missions that partisan warfare could actually resolve, including such active tasks as attacking the enemy where he least expected it, burning magazines, hospitals and other establishments in the enemy rear, and destroying units moving to rejoin their parent army. He also highlighted a wide array of more passive missions, such as alerting forces about the approach of enemy reinforcements, locating enemy supply depots and regrouping areas, and employing obstacles to slow the enemy's retreat.³

Napoleon was the first of the great warriors to conclude that the rear areas of armies were much more vulnerable as the armies became increasingly dependent on long lines of communication and extensive networks of supply bases. This realisation prompted Napoleon to organise his own irregular units to defend France when it was itself invaded in 1814.

During the period of Russia's nineteenth-century colonial wars in the Caucasus region, indigenous detachments in Chechnia and Dagestan headed by Imam Shamil conducted guerrilla warfare against the Russians with some success. British historian John Ellis correctly refers to subsequent Russian expansion in Central Asia, which involved extensive Russian Army operations between 1836 and 1859, as one of the bloodiest guerrilla wars fought by any country during the nineteenth century.⁴ Partisan tactics were also employed extensively in others wars of this period including the American Civil War, the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71, and the Boer War after the turn of the new century. Partisan warfare played an influential role in the campaigns of national

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liberation movements in Ireland, Poland, Macedonia, and Italy. In Italy, Garibaldi and 1,000 of his 'Redshirts' liberated the southern portion of the country and, in so doing, contributed greatly to the victory of the Italian Revolution of 1859–60. Analogously, the Boers in South Africa resorted to guerrilla warfare after the British had destroyed their ability to wage conventional warfare. The British were then forced to undertake major efforts to break the back of the ensuing guerrilla resistance.

During the First World War the armies of the belligerent powers did not suffer greatly from partisan activity in their rear areas. In the Middle East, however, Colonel T. E. Lawrence, better known as 'Lawrence of Arabia', developed new tactics for his irregular forces by striking incessantly at his enemies' flanks rather than striking the enemies' rear or direct front.⁵ Although neither time nor space permits detailed examination of Lawrence's tactics, he was one of the first military commanders to attempt to reduce guerrilla warfare to a specific set of rules. During his 1916–18 campaigns in Arabia and Palestine, Lawrence demonstrated what guerrillas could accomplish when operating within the context of a proper strategic plan. He was also the first military leader to perceive correctly that the true objective of guerrilla warfare is not necessarily fighting itself. He described his strategic planning that eventually defeated the Turks in Arabia in his book, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*. The gist of Lawrence's plan was to destroy Turkish Army material and supplies and not the army's combat soldiers. This was because equipment and supplies were scarce and precious in the Turkish Army, while manpower was more plentiful.

By employing English demolition specialists, Lawrence had the Arabs blow up railway bridges, cut rail lines, and constantly harass fortified Turkish railway stations. In time, the Turks' position in Arabia deteriorated and ultimately became untenable; garrisons eroded away, Turkish strength withered, and Turkish field forces remained effective only on paper.⁶ Regarding guerrilla warfare tactics, Lawrence achieved too much fame to be simply forgotten. Regrettably, the eminent scholar on the guerrilla war, Walter Laqueur, considers Lawrence's exploits to have been magnified out of all proportion, stating, 'Seldom in the history of modern war has so much been written about so little'.⁷

THE RUSSIAN CIVIL WAR

When analysing the phenomenon of guerrilla war, it is essential to consider social, economic, political, and other aspects of a particular society. During the Russian Civil War (1918–20), for example, partisan units of various colours and shades (Red, White, and Green), each denoting a distinct political or social faction, were quite active. For good reasons, however, the most numerous of these were the Red guerrillas, who fought in the Ukraine, Belorussia, the Northern Caucasus, Siberia and the Far East. Red partisan activities were often directed by the Central Headquarters of Partisan Detachments (CHQPD), an organisation whose main characteristic features the Soviet High Command again adopted during the Second World War.⁸ The Red guerrillas were extremely popular with the Red Army High Command. Thus, the first important combat decoration issued by Soviet Russia, the Order of the Red Banner, was awarded to Vasilii Bliukher, who, in the autumn of 1918, commanded the so-called 'Urals Partisan Army'. Numbering about 6,000 partisan fighters, the Army conducted a 1,500-kilometre raid into the White Guards' rear area and, later, joined the 3rd Army on the Eastern Front.⁹ This gifted military commander was properly designated 'a renowned hero of the Civil War, a man who was a legend'.¹⁰ Later he was promoted to the rank of Marshal of the Soviet Union, but died tragically, literally beaten to death by his interrogators, on Stalin's orders.¹¹

During the Civil War, Red partisans were particularly active in Siberia, where they fought against Admiral A. V. Kolchak's White Army.¹² By the end of 1919, Red partisan detachments in Siberia numbered 140,000 fighters.¹³ The Red partisans also proved to be at the least a significant inconvenience for the Kaiser's Army, which occupied vast Russian territories in 1918. At this time the USSR's People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, G. Chicherin, wrote, 'To occupy the whole of Russia instead of the Ukraine and to have vast territories [infested] with popular partisan warfare would take too many German troops from their Western Front. Owing precisely to this fact, the German government readily abandoned its request to bring its troops into Moscow when Mirbach [the German ambassador] was killed there.'¹⁴

The period of the Russian Civil War in Russia is also noteworthy because during and after the war the highest Soviet command levels formulated and later adopted the first formal documents related to partisan missions and tactics. These documents are critical to developing a

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proper understanding of official Communist Party and government doctrine and also provide context for many of the directives the Soviet High Command implemented during the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union (1941–45). Near the end of 1918, the Soviet command examined Red partisan combat experience and added a special chapter termed ‘Partisan Operations’ to its new *Field Manual of the Red Army*. This chapter officially enunciated the wartime mission of partisan detachments. Collectively, the mission of partisans was ‘to inflict maximum material damage on the enemy . . . and to disrupt the enemy’s communication system’.¹⁵

During the first half of 1919, the Red Army High Command published a very interesting document entitled, *Instruction for Organising Local Partisan Detachments*. This *Instruction* was based on the experiences of conducting guerrilla warfare in the rear areas of White Guards’ forces, and it emphasised the voluntary principal of joining the Red partisan units.¹⁶ Later still, all of these dicta would be included in official documents related to the Soviet Partisan Movement of 1941–44.

Nor were the lessons of the Russian Civil War lost on other European communist and socialist movements. As H. Gordon writes, during the 1920s, when Adolf Hitler’s German National Socialists (Nazis) were steadily rising to power, the opposing Social Democrats and Communists in Bavaria engaged in virtual ‘guerrilla warfare with their rightist opponents’.¹⁷

THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Without any doubt, however, the most significant partisan warfare to date took place during the Second World War. Almost every country whose territory the Axis powers occupied attempted to organise some form of resistance to the hated invaders. The *Maquis* in France, the Italian partisans, the Belgian underground, and the Philippine guerrillas are memorialised as gallant Second World War warriors. But, judging by the scale of this type of warfare and the losses the invaders suffered, partisan warfare in Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union merits special attention. During questioning at the Nuremberg Trials, German Field Marshal Erich von Manstein was asked about Soviet partisan activities. He replied, ‘I cannot give you an exact figure from my experience in the Crimea, but as an example I would say I remember in 1944, in the Army Group Center, in the course of seven hours, a

thousand raids took place on roads and railways in the rear, and in the Crimea these raids happened every single day.¹⁸

By the autumn of 1944, the Red Army had liberated most of the territory of the former Soviet Union, which Nazi Germany and her satellites had occupied since June 1941. While this was an important event in many respects, one of the most notable features was that one of the greatest guerrilla organisations in the history of mankind, the Soviet Partisan Movement, ceased to exist. Thereafter, only small partisan groups continued to operate in Poland and Czechoslovakia. This paramilitary organisation, made up primarily of tough fighters, numbered hundreds of thousands of men and women.¹⁹ It was controlled by a very strict chain of command, beginning with the Central Headquarters of the Partisan Movement in Moscow and extending down through republic and district headquarters and also by Communist Party underground cells down to individual partisan detachments and brigades. Some of the party cells numbered as many as several thousand members.

Soviet partisan activities steadily grew from actions by scattered small guerrilla groups and units at the beginning of the German occupation to rather powerful and co-ordinated operations by numerous partisan brigades. As early as autumn 1941, when the Germans were doing everything possible to increase the momentum of their advance towards Moscow, German front-line unit commanders were already complaining about guerrilla activity in their rear area. For example, in his book *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, William Shirer cites remarks by General Blumentritt, the Chief of Staff of the Nazi Fourth Army, whose army in October–November 1941 was in the midst of the Battle for Moscow. Blumentritt described his army's predicament, stating, 'Far behind the front, the first partisan units were beginning to make their presence felt in the vast forests and swamps. Supply columns were frequently ambushed.'²⁰

The Soviet High Command well understood that partisans could achieve the most when their operations were closely co-ordinated with actions by regular forces. Thus, it paid specific attention to promoting co-operation between partisan formations and front-line Red Army units. Of course, ultimately this co-operation became more effective by the end of the fascist occupation later in the war. Nevertheless, there are notable examples even during the early months of the German invasion, indicating that there was already co-operation between Red Army units and guerrilla forces. For example, in January 1942 during an amphibious operation in the Crimea, 700 Red Army soldiers landed on 5 January at

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Evpatoria, and, at the same time, an equal number of local partisans joined in the attack. The goal of this combined operation was to ease German pressure on the Soviet defenders of Sevastopol', the main Soviet naval base on the Black Sea, which was then under siege by the Germans.²¹

The archives of the Operations Division of the Central Headquarters of the Partisan Movement contain several documents that clearly indicate that higher level Red Army commanders were emphasising co-operation between large Red Army formation and the guerrilla units. In addition, as early as November 1941, only three months after Hitler's aggression against the USSR, the North-western Front's Military Council adopted a special resolution directing partisan activity in the *front's* zone of operations. For that matter, the Military Council also organised a special group tasked with planning and co-ordinating partisan operations in order to improve co-operation.²²

In 1943 and 1944, partisan co-operation with Red Army units became obligatory as well as necessary. The most vivid example of such co-ordinated actions occurred during the Soviet strategic offensive code-named Operation 'Bagration', which took place in Belorussia in summer 1944, when the forces of four Soviet *fronts* liberated Belorussia and the eastern portion of Poland. During this massive operation guerrilla detachments were often ordered to silence enemy artillery batteries, hold on to terrain in their zones of operation, block the retreating enemy, and seize bridges that would facilitate the advance of the Red Army's main force. The success of the Soviet attack often depended on or was facilitated by successful partisan actions.

The Soviet High Command paid considerable attention to subordinating the entire guerrilla command structure to Communist Party influence, direction, and leadership. Most partisan units were formed from servicemen who had escaped from enemy encirclement, and most included large numbers of local non-party patriots. Most were scattered over vast territories in the enemy rear area. Despite these facts, in the long run, most, if not all, of these detachments were subordinated to strict Party influence and control. Formed in May 1942, the Central Headquarters of the Partisan Movement itself was under strict control of the Communist Party Central Committee and its head, a staunch Communist and former secretary of the Belorussian Communist Party named P. K. Ponomarenko.

Although some authors dispute the fact that the Communist Party played a dominant role in organising Soviet partisan warfare, other

authors claim that they did. Overwhelming evidence now indicates that Communist Party structures were significantly engaged in planning the organisational and operational nature of the partisan struggle in the enemy rear. Party structures controlled the supply of arms and ammunition, and, at the least, they played a dominant role in formulating the main doctrinal and propaganda basis for the resistance by partisan formations and the civil population in territories occupied by the Nazis.

Russian and Western historiography alike have paid even less attention to analysing Communist Party underground activity. In reality, this activity was sometimes even more complicated and extensive than the more notable partisan activities. Very often Party activists and cells lacked radio communication, they had no organisational headquarters that could document what they had achieved, and they were frequently betrayed by traitors hired by Nazi occupation authorities from among the indigenous population. In the city of Minsk, for example, the Party structure was inexperienced and failed to remain vigilant. On the other hand, the German occupation authorities noted organised resistance to their efforts to pacify the local population and undertook strenuous efforts by all possible means to put an end to the resistance. The Germans tracked down, imprisoned, and cruelly tortured almost the entire underground city Party Committee. Ultimately, in the spring of 1942 the Nazis hanged the Committee members along with the Committee Secretary, Isai Kazenetz.²³

To their credit, the underground party functionaries in the Belorussian capital did not permit these initial failures to disorganise their resistance activity completely. Very soon after, in early 1943, they formed a new underground Party Committee that, unlike its predecessor, correctly emphasised vigilance and the struggle against enemy agents and provocateurs. In fact, one of their most famous subsequent acts of terror became well known far beyond Belorussia. This was the assassination of the German High Commissioner in Belorussia, Wilhelm Kube. On 21 September 1943, a local partisan gave Elena Mazanik, the chambermaid at Kube's house in Minsk, a mine that she placed in Kube's bed. Elena's actions were most precise. The mine exploded at the appointed time and killed only the High Commissioner; his wife who was in bed with her husband at the very moment of the explosion was not even wounded.²⁴

The Party underground did actually play a critical role in Soviet partisan warfare. On the one hand, evidence clearly indicates that Communist rule in the Soviet Union was not without defects. On the

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other hand, many instances prove that underground Party functionaries stoically fulfilled a wide range of different resistance missions. These missions included penetrating Nazi headquarters and other organisations, collecting extensive intelligence data, and releasing captured Red Army servicemen from dozens of concentration camps in occupied territory. In addition, they obtained and delivered weapons and high explosives to the partisans, disseminated propaganda materials, conducted sabotage, and, very often, informed guerrilla commanders about German plans for anti-partisan operations.

To better understand the roots and motivation of the Soviet Partisan Movement and its scale of operations in Soviet-occupied territories from 1941–44, it is necessary to appreciate the harshness of the Nazi regime imposed on the indigenous population in Belorussia and Eastern Europe as a whole. The notorious Nazi New Order meant the creation of a Nazi-ruled Europe. This New Order exploited all resources, including human, for the profit of Germany. Many peoples became essentially slaves of the German master race, and ‘undesirable elements’, meaning primarily Jews and Slavs in the East, were to be exterminated. According to Hitler, the Slavic peoples and the Jews were the ‘*Untermenschen*’, meaning, in essence, *subhumans*. As such, these peoples had no right to exist. However, some of them were needed to toil in the fields and the mines as slaves of their German masters.

A special Ministry for the East European Region headed by Alfred Rosenberg recommended and implemented a wide range of measures to implement and support the New Order. These measures included indiscriminate use of terror, robbery, murder, and bribery of provocateurs. Nazi authorities prohibited all public organisations in the occupied territory and destroyed all cultural monuments, churches, and museums. While formulating the missions of his troops in Russia, Field Marshal Walter von Reichenau, the Commanding General of the German Sixth Army, signed a special order stating that ‘historic and cultural values do not have any significance’.²⁵

To fulfil the requirements of the New Order, the Nazi administration systematically annihilated the local population. Almost from the first days of the German invasion, the images of gallows were commonplace. The Germans filled ravines, anti-tank ditches, and pits with the corpses of killed, tortured, shot, and hanged civilians and captured Red Army soldiers and officers. On 31 August 1941, German SS chief Heinrich Himmler ordered the execution of 100 inmates of the Minsk prison, so that he could see personally how it was done. According to General

Bach-Zelewski, a high SS official who was present during this incident and later was responsible for the anti-guerrilla operations in the occupied Soviet territory, Himmler almost swooned when he saw the lethal effect of the firing squad's first volley. A few minutes later, when it became apparent that the shots had failed to kill two women outright, the SS Fuehrer became quite hysterical. As a result, Himmler ordered that henceforth women and children were not to be shot, but instead dispatched in the gas vans.

No laws existed to protect the lives and property of the population. Instead, complete arbitrariness and lawlessness on the part of the military and the civil administration reigned in the Nazi armies' rear areas. Any individual under the slightest suspicion could be arrested, tortured, hanged, or shot. People were summarily executed for leaving their work places, for violating imposed curfews, for simply reading anti-fascist leaflets, for listening to the radio, and for any other actions prohibited by the occupation authorities.

The extreme suffering of the local population in the occupied territories was also fuelled by outright economic robbery. Hitler hungrily eyed and coveted the USSR's principal regions for agricultural production, the industrial areas of the Ukraine and the Russian oil fields in the Caucasus Mountain region and the Transcaucasus. The Germans created an elaborate network and system to remove foodstuffs, raw materials, and various types of equipment from the Soviet Union. The Central Trade Society 'East', created in July 1941 by order of the German Reich Minister Hermann Goering, and its parallel organisations alone numbered about 7,000 servicemen. In 1942 the Germans dispatched about 30,000 members of the Fascist youth organisation '*Hitlerjugend*' [Hitler Youth] to agricultural regions in occupied Russia to gain experience as future colonists.²⁶ Goering explained his intent at a conference where Reich Commissioners of the occupied Russian regions met with representatives of German military commands to discuss the problem of procuring agricultural produce. There, Goering declared, 'You, like settlers, must be precisely where you can still find anything the German people need. It must be taken from the stores with lightning speed and delivered here.'²⁷

The indigenous population lived under inhuman conditions. Beginning on 5 August 1941, the date Rosenberg's special order was issued, the population was forced to work for 14–16 hours a day with only miserly payment for their labour. The highest salary for a qualified worker was 60 marks per month, and an unqualified labourer received

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less than half this amount, at a time when the cost of a light dinner was 3–5 marks. In addition, the population was not supplied with such common commodities as footwear or clothing. In the winter of 1941–42, after the Nazi armies were defeated at Moscow, the German authorities began the practice of forcibly deporting healthy people to Germany to serve as labourers. In 1942 alone, they deported about 2 million Soviet people to Germany.²⁸

This bloody regime of terror conducted by the occupation authorities played a critical role in kindling the flames of Soviet partisan warfare. This process gained momentum when the mass of the local population began to witness the far-reaching plans of the Nazi administration to pacify the local population by any and all means, to rob it in the interest of the war, and, in the long run, to germanise what population remained.

One of the characteristic features of Soviet partisan warfare was the existence of the so-called partisan zones and regions. The first such regions appeared as early as autumn 1941. However, the defeat of German Army Group Centre at Moscow in winter 1941–42 provided impetus to the expansion of partisan zones. In the Ukraine the partisans controlled the forested areas around Sumy, Chernigov and several other regions. Partisans were also exceptionally active in the mountainous areas of the Crimea. All in all, by spring 1942, the partisans controlled territories equal to the combined area of such countries as Belgium, Holland and Denmark.²⁹

Naturally, since it expected early victory over the Soviet Union, the German High Command was not prepared to deal with large-scale partisan warfare. In addition, the Germans could not imagine that local Soviet authorities in the partisan zones could organise the local population in accordance with Soviet laws. This permitted the partisans to enlist a considerable number of local people into partisan formations. In fact, if the supply of armaments into enemy rear areas could have been significantly improved, the overall strength of the partisan units could have been substantially increased.

The Party apparatus activated special self-defence groups and detachments in many settlements controlled by partisan fighters. The missions of these groups and detachments was to procure and transport foodstuffs and fodder, to collect weapons and ammunition left by servicemen in the field, to conduct reconnaissance, and to prepare alternative partisan bases and camps for partisan families. The self-defence groups' staffs cared for the wounded and sick partisans, and, sometimes, they even took active part in combat actions. The following example illustrates

the utility of the self-defence groups. In spring 1942 100 such groups, numbering a total of 16,000 men, were operating in five regions of the Orel District alone. By the summer of 1942 partisans in the Orel District sent 15,000 men across the front line, and the Belorussian partisans sent another 20,000 healthy reservists across the front lines. These men were then enlisted into the Red Army's ranks.³⁰

The existence of the partisan zones and regions is an issue of some controversy among Russian and some Western scholars who have addressed the problem of partisan warfare. Many Western scholars believe that it was essentially useless to maintain such large areas in the enemy rear under partisan control because, first and foremost, it led to a decrease in partisan activity. They claim that large partisan formations were inactive in these regions, and thus, in this case, partisan forces were not employed productively. Although some historians, principally those in the former Soviet Union's republics, hold the opposite opinion, only impartial and thorough examination of this question can yield an educated answer.

Beginning in 1943 the Soviet Partisan Movement began to expand significantly, and it soon grew into what modern Russian historians term the 'People's War' [literally, all-peoples' warfare]. By this time, partisan fighters were so numerous that it was possible to create a special partisan reserve consisting of thousands of people who were without arms but were ready on the order of the partisan command to join partisan combat units.³¹

Soviet partisans did play a rather significant role in the Second World War. One of the important features of the multifaceted phenomenon of partisan warfare was that the partisan units had to be nimble, and generally they were. This nimbleness enabled them to attack various objectives from different directions and often take the enemy by surprise. Both in earlier and later wartime operations, Soviet commands selected partisan forces for differing missions that required the achievement of surprise and the use of infiltration and hit-and-run tactics.

Any final comprehensive portrayal of the Soviet Partisan Movement would be incomplete without mention of the fact that some nationalist-minded indigenous peoples did not support the Soviet partisans and instead often assisted the Nazi regime in its anti-partisan operations. Some of these people, of course, recalled very well the harsh mistakes of Communist rule, such as the forced collectivisation of agriculture and the annihilation of leading national cultural figures such as writers, artists, poets, and scientists. Nevertheless, if the total number of people

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who supported the Soviet partisans during the whole war is compared with those who were against the Soviets, the tally would be in favour of the former. Understandably, this ratio varied from region to region throughout the occupied Soviet lands. Despite this fact, many local inhabitants frequently supplied the Communist-led partisans with foodstuffs and intelligence information, they often functioned as guides and liaison personnel, and they sometimes even assisted the partisan formations in combat operations.

As concerns the ties between the local population and partisans in the central sector of the Russian–German front, this question will be illuminated in greater detail in Chapter 1. Here, however, is but one example. In his book, *War in the Enemy's Rear*, the author Otto Heilbrunn describes the German command's attempt to win the support of the local population of the Caucasus. With this goal in mind, the Germans executed an operation dubbed 'Shamyl', conducted by units of the special German Brandenburg Division, which had been formed by Admiral Canaris, the chief of the German Counter Intelligence. The Brandenburgers were parachuted into the Causasus Mountains to raise the Caucasian population into revolt. In this instance, in spite of some limited support by the indigenous population, in general, the Germans failed to organise a popular revolt against Soviet authorities.³²

In general, the tactics employed by Soviet partisans coincided with normal partisan-warfare operational techniques. Initially, the partisans operated in small groups, using bases in the forests, swamps, and mountains. One should bear in mind that the Soviet road network was crude and rather poor, and, therefore, the Germans supplied their forces primarily by means of the railways. Thus, the Nazis' communication network became the chief partisan objective with the goal of slowing down the German supply system and disrupting German troop movements by cutting the railroads. When the partisans significantly intensified these attacks, the Germans were forced to pull front-line troops back into reserve to protect their vital rear areas. As the partisan movement in German rear areas grew in 1944 to the more than 250,000 partisans claimed by Soviet sources, German rear-area troops spent more time conducting anti-partisan operations than they did conducting normal operational missions.³³ During the final stages of Soviet offensives or counteroffensives, the partisans cut off enemy stragglers, disrupted enemy lateral communications, ruined roads, and caused units desperately needed at the front to be diverted for the protection of command posts, supply installations, and railways.

The conduct of surprise attacks and ambushes against a moving enemy was considered to be the forte of Soviet partisans. Because they possessed sufficient intelligence information provided by numerous secret agents in various German organisations throughout German occupied territories, partisan commanders usually knew in advance about enemy troop movements. This, together with their excellent first-hand knowledge of the local terrain and the keen mobility of their partisan bands, enabled them to plan effectively and establish ambushes against German rail and vehicular movements.

Detailed analysis of official documents from the Central Headquarters of the Partisan Movement, numerous publications on this subject, and captured reports of the Nazi command permit reconstruction of the main tasks that the Soviet High Command (Stavka) and the Communist Party assigned to its partisan forces. These included:

- elimination of military and economic targets and disruption of the transportation network in the enemy rear area;
- reconnaissance to determine enemy strength in this or that region, enemy plans related to troop movement, the identification of unit commanders, the designation of postal codes, and so on;
- undermining of enemy morale by constant harassment and conducting sabotage missions;
- improving the morale of the populace living in territories occupied by the Germans and promoting popular resistance to occupying forces; and
- tying down enemy forces by keeping them engaged in anti-partisan operations and guarding communications routes.

The missions Soviet partisans fulfilled also fall into two major groups, classified as either clandestine (covert) or overt. Clandestine missions usually involved activities not strictly military in nature. These missions normally involved organising and instigating civil disturbances and some sorts of work slowdown. The most effective weapon in the achievement of these aims was simple sabotage. For example, in the winter of 1941–42, the famous Belorussian partisan leader, Hero of the Soviet Union Konstantin Zaslunov, who was killed in action later in 1942, effectively organised acts of sabotage at the railroad depot in the city of Orsha. His actions caused the freezing of many water pumping houses, and, as a result, the Germans experienced significant difficulty in supplying their rail locomotives with water.

Overt operations sought not only to harass the Germans but also to

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inflict significant losses on them through the use of demolitions and the conduct of raids on German rear-area installations. After Soviet partisans had become better organised, trained, and equipped, and their actions were more closely co-ordinated with operations taking place along the front, partisan operations assumed greater significance. Major operations planned along the front were often accompanied by very vigorous partisan activity aimed at disrupting and destroying enemy lines of communications. For example, on the eve of the Soviet counteroffensive operation at Kursk in July 1943, the Germans experienced the misfortune of having their main rail supply line cut at hundreds of points on the single night of 3 August 1943. The operation was so effective that it stalled all German rail traffic for several days. Such operations had the obvious adverse effect of seriously hampering the resupply of German front-line troops, and, although the Germans later repaired the demolished rail line, the outcome of the battle was, of course, still adversely effected. By interrupting rail traffic and communications at a time when the German command was engaged in critical operations at the front, the partisans prevented the Germans from delivering much needed reinforcements and equipment to critical points. In addition, the Germans were forced to undertake vigorous actions requiring the participation of a substantial number of forces to protect their lines of communication.

Considerable controversy, however, still rages over the real value of these partisan actions, whether or not they were successful. Some Western scholars, most notably some American and British historians, consider the entire Soviet Partisan Movement to have been an ineffective undertaking. Judging by the number of personnel involved, they maintain that the missions partisans attempted to perform, whether reconnaissance or railway sabotage, could have been more successfully conducted by the regular Red Army forces. Conversely, other authors claim just the opposite. They argue that Soviet partisan warfare was an immensely important military-political tool in the defeat of Nazi and Axis forces. Thus, many very deep contradictions exist in different accounts and assessments of the subject.

Several examples of these divergent views will suffice. First, there are conflicting assessments regarding German losses suffered due to partisan activity. Walter Laqueur claims that fascist losses due to Soviet partisan activity amounted to about 35,000 men, only half of whom were Germans.³⁴ Cooper estimates German losses at between 15,000 and 20,000 men.³⁵ At the other extreme, the *Great Soviet Encyclopaedia* states

that Soviet partisans killed, wounded or captured one million German servicemen and their ‘servants’ in the form of local policemen, editors of pro-Nazi newspapers, German interpreters, and personnel serving in anti-partisan units.³⁶ Such widely divergent figures clearly indicate that it is necessary to re-examine thoroughly the whole Soviet Partisan Movement phenomenon, this time on the basis of verified documents and archival sources.

It stands to reason that Soviet partisans did assist the Red Army to a certain extent in their fight against Hitler’s armies, and they certainly harassed Nazi occupation authorities to a considerable extent. What is most important now, however, is to evaluate more precisely the efficiency with which the partisans fulfilled their assigned missions. In general, I believe that Soviet partisan activities were an important operational factor in the ultimate outcome of the war. Additionally, such activities played a considerable role in Soviet operational planning at the *front* and the groups of *fronts* levels of command.

At this point one must note that, after being antagonists for several decades, with the Cold War at an end, the United States and Russia have once again become friends, as they were during the Second World War. The Soviet Union, America’s premier enemy during the Cold War, has now become Russia, and Russia has now become an object of substantial financial and technical assistance. In fact, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is now rendering assistance to almost all the countries in the so-called Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). At the same time, the stark clash of ideologies between the two former warring camps has been eliminated with the disintegration of socialism, and capitalism has emerged triumphant. This now enables us to appreciate the Second World War’s inseparable and ubiquitous phenomenon of partisan warfare in less biased fashion. It would not be superfluous to add that, since a significant amount of new Russian archival and other information on Soviet partisan activities has become available in recent years, it would be expedient to exploit this new data in a critique and update of previous studies on Soviet partisan warfare. However, a sampling of new materials found in recent Russian historical publications makes it abundantly clear that this new data will, in turn, have to be checked against original archival records. The Russian archives are now being opened for mass use instead of being used only by former official historians. Although this detailed research will be immensely time-consuming, its contributions in terms of credible scholarship will be immense and important.

The 50th Anniversary of the end of what, in effect, was the end of one

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of the greatest human massacres in history also impels us towards this study. According to the latest estimates, the Second World War cost the population of the Soviet Union about 30 million human lives. This amounts to about half of the total of 60 million lives that the 72 nations involved in the war lost. The greatest proportion of Soviet wartime human losses occurred on the territory occupied by the Nazis. This territory was the scene of the harshest partisan fighting.

HISTORIOGRAPHY

The history of the partisan warfare from 1941 through 1944 in temporarily occupied Soviet territory has been the focus of many books, monographs, memoirs, novels, and stories both in the former Soviet Union, which seems quite natural, and in many other countries, particularly the US, Great Britain, and Germany. The first such analyses appeared in the US as early as 1942. At the very moment Hitler's aggression began, the attentive American, Erskine Caldwell, happened to be visiting the USSR. In the summer and autumn of 1941, he personally met some of the leaders of the first Soviet partisan units fighting in the rear area of the crack German Army Group Centre, which was commanded by Field Marshal Fedor von Bock.

Caldwell's keen observations in his book *All-Out on the Road to Smolensk*, which was published in New York in 1942, prompted him to conclude that, from the very beginning of the war, the Soviet partisans represented a significant threat to Hitler's crushing military machine. He wrote, 'While the ten million members of the People's Army in the Soviet Union were doing a job that had already enabled the Red Army to fight the invading Germans to a standstill along all sectors of the 1,500-mile front, the activities of partisan warfare were even more spectacular.'³⁷ Henry Steele Commager expressed the same opinion several years later in his book *The Pocket History of the Second World War*, which was published in 1945.³⁸

In the Soviet Union, P. K. Ponomarenko, the chief of the Central Headquarters of the Partisan Movement, investigated the results of Soviet partisan warfare from its birth up to 1943 and its missions later in the war. His assessment appeared in the magazine *Bolshevik* (issue No. 13 in 1943), fully a year and a half before the termination of wartime Soviet partisan activity.³⁹

Books on the history of the Soviet Partisan Movement may be sub-

divided into several distinct groups. The most important of these groups consists of works devoted exclusively to an analysis of Soviet partisan operations. This group includes works by American authors such as E. Howell, *The Soviet Partisan Movement 1941–1944* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1956); an anthology of articles edited by F. Osanka, *Modern Guerrilla Warfare: Fighting Communist Guerrilla Movements, 1941–1961* (New York: The Free Press, 1962); and a voluminous collective monograph edited by J. Armstrong, *Soviet Partisans in World War II* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1964). Works by British authors that fall into this category include Brigadier-General C. Dixon and Dr O. Heilbrunn, *Communist Guerrilla Movement 1941–1944* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1954); and M. Cooper, *The Phantom War: The German Struggle against Soviet Partisans, 1941–1944* (London: Macdonald and Jane's, 1979). In addition, at the request of US authorities, the former Nazi General K. Drum wrote an instructive book entitled *Air Power and Russian Partisan Warfare* (New York: Arno Press, 1968).

Russian historians paid considerable attention to this subject, and many of their works were published. Foremost among these works were the following:

- A. Zalessky, *V. partizanskikh kraiax i zonakh: Patrioticheskii podvig Sovetskogo krestian'stva v tylu vraga (1941–1944)* [In partisan regions and zones: The patriotic feat of Soviet peasants in the enemy rear (1941–1944)] (Moscow: Sotzkniga, 1962);
- P. Kalinin, *Partizanskaia respublika* [The Partisan republic] (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1964);
- T. A. Logunova and Iu. A. Moshkov (eds), *Partizanskoe dvizhenie v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny Sovetskogo Soiuza (1941–1945): Sbornik dokumentov i materialov. vypusk. 1* [The partisan movement in the years of the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union (1941–1945): Collection of documents and materials, issue 1] (Moscow: Izdat. Mosc. Universiteta, 1969);
- *Sovetskie partizany: iz istorii Sovetskogo partizanskogo dvizheniia v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny. 2-e izdanie* [Soviet partisans: From the history of the Soviet Partisan Movement in the years of the Great Patriotic War. 2nd edition] (Moscow: Politizdat, 1963);
- *Vsenarodnoe partizanskoe dvizhenie v Belorussii v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny (iun' 1941–iul' 1944). Dokumenty i materialy v 3-kh tomakh* [The all-peoples' partisan movement in Belorussia during the

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Great Patriotic War (June 1941–July 1944). Documents and materials in 3 volumes] (Minsk: Belarus, 1967–81); and many others.⁴⁰

The second category of books in which Soviet partisan warfare is investigated contains works devoted to more general analysis of this type of warfare. This category includes works by the authoritative expert on this problem, Professor Walter Laqueur, *Guerrilla: A Historical and Critical Study* (Boston/Toronto: Little, Brown, 1976); and *Guerrilla Reader: A Historical Anthology* (New York: Meridian Books, 1977). Other volumes include former US Marine Corps Captain R. Asprey, *War in the Shadow: The Guerrilla in History* (London: Macdonald and Jane's, 1976); British researcher J. Ellis, *A Short History of Guerrilla Warfare* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1976); British historians D. Mountfield, *The Partisans* (London: Hamlyn, 1979); and K. Macksey, *The Partisans of Europe in World War II* (London: Hart-Davis, 1975).

Very often, works that examine the Nazi regime's occupation policies in temporarily occupied Soviet territory also analyse the Soviet Partisan Movement. A. Dallin, *German Rule in Russia 1941–1945: A Study of Occupation Politics* (London: Macmillan, 1957), and work by I. Lubachko, *Byelorussia under Soviet Rule, 1917–1957* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1972), are among the titles in this category.

A large category of books that treat the Soviet Partisan Movement tangentially includes more general publications on the history of the war on the Soviet–German front. These include E. Ziemke, *Stalingrad to Berlin: The German Defeat in the East* (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of the Military History, US Army, 1968); British Colonel A. Seaton, *The Battle for Moscow 1941–1942* (London: Hart-Davis, 1971); US historian M. Caidin, *The Tigers are Burning* (Los Angeles: Pinnacle Books, 1980), which went through several editions; J. Erickson, *The Road to Stalingrad: Stalin's War with Germany* (New York: Harper, 1975), and *The Road to Berlin* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1983); and D. Glantz and J. House's more recent work, *When Titans Clashed: How the Red Army Stopped Hitler* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1995).

Soviet publications of this category include the imposing six-volume history of the war, *Istoriia Velikoi Otechesvennoi voyny sovetskogo Soiuza, 1941–1945, v 6 tomakh* [A history of the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union, 1941–1945, in 6 vols] (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1960–65); the 12-volume *Istoriia Vtoroi Mirovoi voyny, 1939–1945, v 12 tomakh* [A

history of the Second World War, 1939–1945, in 12 vols] (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1973–82); *Istoriia Moskvy v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voyny i v poslevoennyi period* [A history of Moscow in the years of the Great Patriotic War and in the post-war period] (Moscow: 'Nauka', 1967); and *Sovetskii Soiuz v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voyny 1941–1945* [The Soviet Union in the years of the Great Patriotic War] (Moscow: 'Nauka', 1977).

Works by British and American historians who specialise in the general history of Russia and the former USSR also analyse the struggle of Soviet partisans in the enemy rear. This category of works includes N. Riasanovsky, *History of Russia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977); B. Dmytryshyn, *A History of Russia* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1977); P. Dukes, *A History of Russia: Medieval, Modern, Contemporary* (London: Macmillan, 1974); and G. Stephenson, *Russia from 1812 to 1945: A History* (New York: Macmillan, 1970).

In addition, some books written after war's end by prominent Soviet partisan fighters, such as Fedorov, Kovpak, Ponomarenko, Medvedev, and others have been translated into English and published in Great Britain and the United States.⁴¹

Therefore, just a simple enumeration of the works devoted to Soviet partisan activities indicates the immense attraction of this type of warfare to many scholars, both inside Russia and abroad. This attraction in turn underscores the seriousness of the topic and the necessity that it be treated in a thoroughly professional and exhaustive manner. This is even more important in light of the newly released archival materials and other source materials on the subject.

This monograph also represents a direct response to valid criticisms by many Western scholars concerning the lamentable shortage of comprehensive and credible books on all aspects of the Soviet–German War. This includes both existing studies that have yet to be translated from Russian into English and new original scholarship on the subject.⁴² Russian scholars recognise this fact. For example, the well-known scholar of Russian history, Professor B. Dmytryshyn, has stated categorically that a complete study of the Soviet Partisan Movement remains to be written.⁴³ I agree and hope this volume will help fill this vacuum.

While preparing this work, I paid considerable attention to conducting interviews (oral history) with many former partisans who are still alive. Virtually all were kind enough to share their experiences in the Soviet Partisan Movement with me, and they did so frankly and candidly. Among those is my father-in-law, Matvei L. Dordik, who

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fought for three years in one of the so-called '*Burevestnik*' [Seabird] Belorussian Partisan Brigades. That brigade's combat record is also detailed in the voluminous *History of Belorussia* (Vol. 4, p. 272).⁴⁴

RELEVANCE

The partisan experience in the Second World War clearly had direct applicability to the conduct of warfare in the post-war years. Since the war's end, many military specialists, including US Army experts, thoroughly and justifiably examined and evaluated the history and significance of partisan guerrilla warfare during the Second World War. During the post-war years, at least in part, that study led to the formation in the US Army of small units (called Special Forces) tasked with conducting partisan war. The primary missions of these forces were to train in partisan tactics and the conduct of guerrilla warfare and, in case of hostilities, each was to function as a sort of nucleus for the formation of large partisan formations of up to 1,500 men.⁴⁵

During the Cold War years, a period when revolutionary guerrillas flourished in many regions, the US Army prepared and issued a special manual on the nature and conduct of guerrilla warfare. This manual specified the command responsibilities in two primary spheres: (1) how to organise guerrilla actions in the enemy rear; and (2) decide what measures must be considered for the conduct of anti-guerrilla operations. The finished product, numbered *Field Manual (FM) 31-21*, and entitled 'Guerrilla Warfare and Special Forces Operations', observed that:

Guerrilla warfare is the responsibility of the United States Army ... Guerrilla warfare is characterised by offensive action. Guerrillas rely upon mobility, elusiveness and surprise. In addition to these traits, there are other characteristics that should be mentioned: civilian support, outside sponsorship, political aspects, legal aspects, tactics, and developmental aspects.⁴⁶

After the end of the Second World War, many national-liberation movements in Asia, Africa, and Latin America extensively employed partisan fighting as a new form of warfare. American unconventional-warfare specialists attempted to apply their new-found anti-guerrilla experience to suppress the Communist guerrilla uprising in Greece in 1948-49.⁴⁷ There, the Americans used their Joint United States Military

Advisory and Planning Group (JUSMAPG) to control and co-ordinate the anti-guerrilla operation. Many also recall the actions of North Korean and Chinese partisans against United Nations forces during the Korean War in 1950–53. Guerrilla forces also achieved significant results in Cuba, Bolivia, Peru, Columbia, Kenya, Algeria, Indonesia, Vietnam and in many other countries around the globe, including, more recently, in Afghanistan.

With considerable justification, spectacular guerrilla successes prompted some unconventional warfare theorists, such as the French writers Régis Debray and Frantz Fanon, to refer to partisan warfare as the motive force behind all revolutionary struggle.⁴⁸ Thus, Debray wrote, 'It is necessary to recognise the partisan movement as a leading and motive force of the movement (revolutionary) as a whole.'⁴⁹ On the other hand, some warned that guerrilla fighting should not be worshipped as a panacea. For example, Che Guevara, the legendary partisan fighter who was killed in Bolivia in October 1967, repeated this warning. He declared, 'Of course, when we speak about the conditions necessary for winning the revolution, it would be wrong to think that they were created entirely by a guerrilla centre . . . It is impossible to achieve final victory only by guerrilla fighting.'⁵⁰

As we approach the third millennium, large-scale guerrilla warfare still continues to take place in some parts of the globe. Good examples of contemporary partisan warfare are offered by the Kurdish struggle in Iraq and Turkey, by the complex developments in former Yugoslavia, and by fighting between the former Soviet republics of Armenia and Azerbaidzhan and the separatists of Abkhasia against Georgians. In 1993 the notorious Russian nationalist, Vladimir Zhirinovsky organised a volunteer group that included specialists in guerrilla warfare, and sent them to Iraq to assist President Saddam Hussein in sabotage operations against the Americans. Zhirinovsky, who was a major contender in the 1996 Russian presidential election, boldly declared to his supporters at Sheremetev Airport, 'You are going to defend Iraq, a victim of reckless aggression by America and Israel.'⁵¹ Today, North Africa also harbours half a dozen guerrilla movements. Thus, partisans have appeared innumerable times in the past, and their impact has been significant. The world will be committing a grievous error if it assumes that developments in science and technology will mitigate the likelihood or the damaging effects of guerrilla warfare in the future.

Guerrilla warfare continues to attract considerable attention today under a variety of rubrics in a host of publications. Such terms as 'para-

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military operations', 'unconventional war', 'irregular warfare', 'internal war', and other lesser-used terms essentially mean nothing less than guerrilla warfare. No doubt each term serves some purpose and has its own clientele. Regardless of the varied terminology, it would be a great mistake to under-dramatise the threats or opportunities associated with this kind of warfare. Guerrilla warfare exploits mobility, concealment, and surprise, and it thrives under the tutelage of daring, imaginative and resourceful leaders. The principal dictum of guerrilla fighting has been and remains to attack the weak and fly from the strong. In this sense, one must agree with Alvin Toffler's judgement that present and future societies may be vulnerable not only to actions of anarcho-romantics, right-wing fanatics, or honest-to-God terrorists, but, to a certain degree, also to varying forms of time-honoured guerrilla activities.⁵²

Any attempt to influence the causes of this form of struggle in areas vital to the democratic world should be couched in a sound understanding that guerrilla warfare has always been and still is a two-edged sword. Political, economic, and social factors shape the context for guerrilla struggle and represent the cornerstone for guerrilla war. Otherwise, guerrilla movements would cease to exist. Since belief in what they are doing forms the core of all guerrilla movements, political, economic, and social measures are the best way to combat them.

NOTES

1. C. Clausewitz, *O voine* [On war], tom 2 (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1940), pp. 172–9. Translated into Russian from German.
2. D. Davidoff, *La Guerre des Partisans* [Partisan War] (Paris: J. Correard, 1841), pp. 64–5.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 70.
4. J. A. Ellis, *A Short History of Guerrilla Warfare* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1976), p. 112.
5. In his latest analysis on the situation in the Soviet Union during the 1920s and 1930s, R. Tucker introduced a very interesting document that stated Lawrence of Arabia was tried *in absentia* as a British spy by a Soviet court for, as was stated, wanting to undermine the Soviet state. See R. Tucker, *Stalin in Power: The Revolution from Above, 1928–41* (New York and London: Norton, 1990), p. 99.
6. Ellis, *A Short History of Guerrilla Warfare*, pp. 130–2.
7. W. Laqueur, *Guerrilla: A Historical and Critical Study* (Boston, MA and Toronto: Little, Brown, 1976), pp. 154, 155.
8. *Voennyi entsiklopedicheskii slovar'* [Military-encyclopaedic dictionary] (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1984), p. 540. Hereafter cited as *VES*.

9. *Grazhdanskaia voina v SSSR* [The Civil War in the USSR] v 2-kh tomakh [in 2 volumes], tom 1 (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1980), p. 193.
10. D. Zatonsky, *Nedelia* [Weekly], No. 28, 1988.
11. *Argumenty i fakty* [Arguments and facts], 13 January 1990.
12. *Istoriia grazhdanskoi voiny v SSSR* [A history of the Civil War in the USSR] v 5-tomakh [in 5 vols], tom 4 (Moscow: Politicheskaiia literatura, 1959), pp. 134–48; G. Stewart, *The White Armies of Russia: A Chronicle of Counter-Revolution and Allied Intervention* (New York: Macmillan, 1933), p. 299.
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14. G. Chicherin, *Statii i rechi po voprosam mezhdunarodnoi politiki* [Articles and speeches on questions of foreign policy] (Moscow: Sotzekniga, 1961), p. 259.
15. Ia. Pavlov, *Na prochnom fundamente Marksizma-Leninizma* [On the soundness of the fundamentals of Marxism and Leninism] (Minsk: Znanie, 1980), p. 45.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 46.
17. H. Gordon, *Hitler and the Beer Hall Putsch* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972), p. 34.
18. Quoted in F. Osanka, ed., *Modern Guerrilla Warfare: Fighting Communist Guerrilla Movements, 1941–1961* (New York: The Free Press, 1962), p. 47.
19. During the war there were 6,200 partisan detachments and underground Party groups in the temporarily occupied Soviet territories, which comprised about 1 million men. See *Sovetskaia voennaia entsiklopediia* [Soviet military encyclopaedia] v 8 tomakh [in 8 vols], tom 6 (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1978), p. 231. Hereafter cited as *SVE*.
20. W. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1960), p. 860.
21. *Istoriia Vtoroi Mirovoi voiny, 1939–1945* [A history of the Second World War, 1939–1945] v 12 tomakh [in 12 vols], tom 1 (Moscow, Voenizdat, 1975), p. 322 (hereafter cited as *IVMV*); *50 let vooruzhennykh sil SSSR* [50 years of the Soviet Armed Forces] (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1968), p. 298.
22. *Rossiiskii tsentr khraneniia i izucheniia dokumentov noveishiei istorii* [The Russian Centre for Preserving Documents of Recent History], f. 69, op.1, d.48, 11, pp. 1–5.
23. I. Novikov, *Bessmertie Minska* [Eternal Minsk] (Minsk: Belarus, 1977), pp. 89–97.
24. *Ibid.*, pp. 205–10.
25. *Prestupnie tseli – prestupnie sredstva: Dokumenty ob okkupatsionnoi politike fashistskoi Germanii na territorii SSSR (1941–1944 gg.)* [Criminal aims: criminal documents concerning the occupation policies of Fascist Germany on Soviet territory (1941–1944)] (Moscow: Politizdat, 1968), pp. 66–7.
26. *Nemetskoi-fashistskii okkupatsionnii regime (1941–1944 gg.)* [The German–Fascist occupation regime (1941–1944)] (Moscow: Politizdat, 1965), pp. 76, 158.

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28. *Ibid.*, p. 799.
29. *Istoriia Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny Sovetskogo Soiuz, 1941–1945* [A history of the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union, 1941–1945] v 6-tomakh [in 6 volumes], tom. 2 (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1961), p. 336. Hereafter cited as *IVOVSS*.
30. *Ocherki istorii brianskoi organizatsii KPSS* [Survey of the history of the Briansk Communist Party organisation] (Tula, 1968), p. 260; A. Zalessky, *V partizanskikh kraiaakh i zonakh* [In partisan regions and zones] (Moscow: Sotzkniga, 1962), p. 374.
31. 'Belarus u vjalikai aichinnai vaine, 1941–1945' [Belarus in the Great Patriotic War, 1941–1945], in *Belarusskaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia* [The Belorussian Soviet encyclopaedia] (Minsk, 1990), p. 483.
32. O. Heilbrunn, *War in the Enemy's Rear* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1963), p. 39.
33. *IVMV*, tom 8, p. 156.
34. Laqueur, *Guerrilla*, p. 203.
35. M. Cooper, *The Phantom War: The German Struggle against Soviet Partisans, 1941–1944* (London: Macdonald and Jane's, 1979), pp. viii, ix.
36. *Bol'shaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia* [The great Soviet encyclopaedia], 3-oe vypusk [3rd edn], tom 19 (Moscow, 1975), p. 234. Hereafter cited as *BSE*.
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38. H. S. Commager, *The Pocket History of the Second World War* (New York: Pocket Books, 1945), p. 198.
39. P. Ponomarenko, 'Partizanskoe dvizhenie v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine Sovetskogo Soiuz' [The Partisan Movement in the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union], *Bolshevik*, No. 13 (1943), pp. 16–29.
40. See N. Aziassky and S. Tiushkevich, 'Istoriografiia i nekotorye voprosy metodologii issledovaniia temy' [Historiography and some questions of methodologies in pursuing a subject], in *Partiia vo glave narodnoi bor'by v tylu vruga 1941–1944* [The Party at the head of the people's struggle in the enemy rear area, 1941–1945] (Moscow: Mysl', 1976), pp. 3–45; V. Andrianov, 'Reidy partizan' [Partisan raids], *Voenna-istoricheskii zhurnal* [Military-historical Journal], No. 3 (March 1973), pp. 30–8 (hereafter cited as *VIZh*); A. Bruchanov, 'Boevye deistviia partizan na kommunikatsiiaakh vruga' [Partisan combat operations against enemy communications], *VIZh*, No. 11 (November 1970), pp. 79–82; L. Bychkov, *Partizanskoe dvizhenie v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny 1941–1945: Kratkii ocherk* [The Partisan Movement in the Great Patriotic War, 1941–1945: A short survey] (Moscow: Mysl', 1965); *Voina v tylu vruga: O nekotorykh problemakh istorii Sovetskogo partizanskogo dvizheniia v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny* [The

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PART I

CAUSES OF THE PARTISAN STRUGGLE ON TEMPORARILY OCCUPIED SOVIET TERRITORY, 1941–44

Causes of the Partisan Struggle on Temporarily Occupied Soviet Territory, 1941–44

Long before 1941 Hitler had dreamed about marching to the east and defeating the Bolshevik State. In his book *Mein Kampf*, Hitler menacingly declared:

And so we National Socialists take up where we broke off six hundred years ago. We stop the endless German movement toward the south and west of Europe and turn our gaze toward the lands of the East . . . When we speak of new territory in Europe today we must think principally of Russia and her border vassal states. Destiny itself seems to wish to point out the way to us here . . . This colossal empire in the East is ripe for dissolution, and the end of the Jewish domination will also be the end of Russia as a state.¹

When developing its plan ‘Barbarossa’ to crush the Soviet Union within the period of a couple of months, in June 1941 the Nazi High Command concentrated substantial military forces along an extensive front extending from the Baltic to the Black Sea. During the first stage of the ambitious operation, the German plan envisioned the destruction of the bulk of the Red Army in the region west of the Dnepr and Western Dvina Rivers and the prevention of a Soviet withdrawal to the rear. The plan then called for German forces to seize Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, and the Donbas (Donets Basin) region and reach the line Astrakhan’, Volga River, and Arkhangel’sk. To fulfil this plan, the Germans concentrated 190 combat divisions, including 19 tank and 14 motorised divisions, along the Soviet border and supported this massive force with four Air Fleets and the Finnish and Romanian Air Forces. All told, Germany and its allied satellite states committed 5.5 million soldiers,

47,000 field artillery pieces and mortars, 4,300 tanks, and about 5,000 combat aircraft to take part in the initial assault against the USSR.²

Of course, the initial Nazi attack, which began upon receipt of the coded signal 'Dortmund', signalling the commencement of Operation 'Barbarossa', was very difficult for the Red Army to withstand. Worse still, largely because of Stalin's policies, the Soviet High Command was not prepared to contend effectively with so harsh and heavy a blow. On the first day of 'Barbarossa', General Franz Halder, the chief of the German Army General Staff, noted in his famous diary that the Soviets were 'tactically surprised along the entire front'. Hundreds of Soviet planes were caught by surprise and destroyed on their airfields.

Although Soviet resistance in many sectors of the long German–Soviet front was intense, nevertheless, the general situation for the Soviet Union was extremely grave. The German exploitation of surprise and the concentration of German forces, such that they achieved five- to ten-fold numerical superiority in some key front sectors, enabled the Germans to win early and dramatic victories.

Josef Stalin was shocked and could not believe the terrible losses the Red Army was suffering. In his memoirs, which were published in *Ogonek* magazine in 1989, Nikita Khrushchev described the Soviet dictator's behaviour when he heard the first grave news of the Nazi assault. Stalin met with his fellow members of the Politburo of the Communist Party Central Committee and is said to have uttered the following words, 'The war has started, and it is developing catastrophically. Lenin has left us a proletarian state, and we are about to lose it. I renounce the leadership.'³ He then left the Kremlin and spent about a week in solitude at his country house. That is why the radio address to the Soviet people officially announcing the fact of the German invasion was delivered by V. M. Molotov, the Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs.⁴ When Politburo members Molotov, Beria, Kaganovich, and Voroshilov subsequently came to Stalin's country house to attempt to persuade him to resume the leadership of the state, the owner looked, as Khrushchev vividly described, very scared, as if his former colleagues had come to arrest him.⁵

At the beginning of the Soviet–German War, no government in the world believed that the Soviet Union could withstand such a heavy Nazi blow. British intelligence estimated that the USSR would be capable of rendering resistance for no more than 10 days.⁶ US President Franklin Roosevelt's military advisers were equally pessimistic about Soviet prospects for survival. They concluded that the Germans would com-

pletely defeat and occupy Russia within a month at the minimum and within three months at the maximum.⁷ The fact that the highest levels of the US Armed Forces did not believe that the Soviet Union could fight effectively against Nazi Germany and its satellites also adversely influenced the US Congress regarding the issue of providing assistance to the Soviets through Lend-Lease.⁸ Especially tragic in this regard was the July 1941 declaration by George C. Marshall, the Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, that the Red Army would likely be crushed.⁹

Only the diary of Fascist Italy's Foreign Minister, Count Ciano, the son-in-law of Italian dictator Benito Mussolini, contains strange words expressing doubts over the likelihood of easy and early German victory. At 0300 hours on the morning of 22 June 1941, the German Ambassador in Rome, von Bismarck, delivered to Foreign Minister Ciano Hitler's long message about his decision to attack the Soviet Union. Ciano immediately telephoned Mussolini, who was resting at his summer home at Riccione. As soon as the Duce had rubbed the sleep from his eyes, he ordered an immediate declaration of war on the USSR, although he knew that the Germans would receive a bloody nose. Reflecting his doubts, Mussolini said to his son-in-law, 'I hope for only one thing, that in this war in the East, the Germans lose a lot of feathers.'¹⁰

One of the few encouraging events to occur in the initial days of war was British Prime Minister Churchill's declaration of support for the Soviet Union, which he uttered on 23 June. Churchill stated that, although, 'No one has been a more consistent opponent to Communism than I have been for the last twenty-five years', nevertheless, 'Any man or state who fights on against Nazidom will have our aid.'¹¹ These words were a virtual declaration of friendship in the fight against Hitler.

It is a fact that many Red Army units displayed bravery and resourcefulness during the initial days of fighting against the Nazis. Nonetheless, within the first three weeks of the Nazi assault, the Wehrmacht forced the Red Army to abandon Latvia, Lithuania, part of Estonia, almost the whole of Belorussia and Moldavia, and the greater part of the Ukraine. German armies penetrated 450–500 kilometres into the depths of Russia along the north-western axis, 450–600 kilometres along the western axis, and 300–350 kilometres along the south-western axis.¹² As a result, during the summer and autumn of 1941, the Germans seized an area of 1.5 million square kilometres of Soviet territory where 74.5 million people had lived before the war.¹³

By the autumn the Soviet Union was in great peril. The Germans

deprived the country of its iron and steel resources in the south and seized the valuable Donbas coalfields. Worse still, most of the large number of industrial plants that had been evacuated to the east were not yet in operation. The Soviet Union's total industrial output in the second half of 1941 was down to less than one half the pre-war level. The German advance severely disrupted Soviet transport, and what transport remained was operating under terrific strain. All of these grim realities made it extremely difficult to supply the struggling Armed Forces with adequate arms and munitions.¹⁴

At the beginning of July 1941, Franz Halder, the German General Staff chief, expressed his faith in early German victory in his diary. On 14 July Hitler was confident enough to issue a directive recommending that Wehrmacht strength be cut 'considerably in the near future.' In addition, since Germany was still at war with Great Britain, which the US was tacitly supporting, he ordered armaments production to concentrate on naval ships and Luftwaffe aircraft.¹⁵ In fact, by the end of the summer of 1941, Hitler was convinced that the Soviet Union was finished. Consequently, at the end of September, he instructed the German High Command to take necessary measures to disband 40 infantry divisions so that this additional manpower would be available for use in German industry.¹⁶

In this very parlous situation at the beginning of the war, the Soviet political and military leadership did all in its power to promote resistance to the advancing German forces. Quite naturally, their thoughts turned to partisan actions. Partisans, they believed, could be used not only to harass the enemy but also to inflict losses on him.

A factor very conducive to unleashing partisan warfare in the enemy rear was the nature of the occupied territory itself. The vast area occupied by the Germans during the first months of the war from Kiev northward to the Baltic Sea was ideal terrain for conducting partisan operations; the Soviets exploited it to the full. This region of the former Soviet Union is low and marshy, and most of it is covered with extensive forests or numerous groves of trees. The forests and groves provided concealment for the partisans and hidden bases from which they could conduct lightning raids. The swampy ground prevented the Germans from sending heavy motorised equipment, such as armoured vehicles, tanks, and heavy artillery, in pursuit of the partisans. Moreover, during the winter months the partisan fighters possessed another advantage over the Germans. Accustomed to the Russian climate, they were far better prepared to endure the bitter cold than their German opponents,

CAUSES OF THE PARTISAN STRUGGLE

and they were able to carry out their hit-and-run attacks no matter how harsh the weather conditions became.

Thus, despite the generally unfavourable situation the Soviets faced at the beginning of the German offensive, the rich experience in guerrilla warfare that they had acquired during the Russian Civil War conditioned Soviet forces to organise and conduct large-scale partisan war. Although critical of various aspects of the Soviet partisan movement during the war, the German author, Otto Heilbrunn, accurately and correctly described the situation at the Soviet–German front regarding partisan warfare. He wrote:

The outstanding patriotic guerrilla movement of World War II was, of course, that of Soviet Russia. Nowhere were conditions for its inception more favourable. There was in Russia a lawful government, resident in the country, and with all the might of State and Party behind it; there was an unbeaten Army, a large reservoir of manpower in the occupied areas from which partisans could be raised; much of occupied Russia was excellent guerrilla territory – the forests, the swamps and the mountains; and from the vast unoccupied areas the partisans could be reinforced and supplied . . . Finally, the Soviets had had fair experience of guerrilla fighting in the days of the Civil War.¹⁷

NOTES

1. A. Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1943), p. 654.
2. *IVMV*, tom 4, p. 21.
3. *Ogonek*, No. 13 (July 1989), p. 18.
4. *Pravda*, 23 June 1941.
5. *Ogonek*, No. 13 (July 1989), p. 18.
6. A. J. P. Taylor, *The Second World War: An Illustrated History* (New York: Penguin, 1976), p. 98.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 99.
8. R. Jones, *The Roads to Russia: United States Lend-Lease to the Soviet Union* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1969), p. 34.
9. J. Curtiss, 'Russian History in the United States: Vistas and Perspective', *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, Vol. XII, No. 1, 1970, pp. 26, 27.
10. G. Ciano, *The Ciano Diaries, 1939–1943*, ed. Hugh Wilson (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1946), pp. 369, 372.
11. As quoted in D. Treadgold, *Twentieth Century Russia* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1981), p. 338.

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12. *Velikaia Otechestvennaia voina Sovetskogo Soiuz, 1941–1945: Kratkaia istoriia* [The Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union, 1941–1945: A Short History] (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1965), pp. 64, 68.
13. *IVMV*, tom 4, p. 129.
14. *Velikaia Otechestvennaia voina Sovetskogo Soiuz 1941–1945* [The Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union 1941–1945] (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1984), p. 88.
15. W. Shirer, *Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, p. 853.
16. Ibid.
17. O. Heilbrunn, *Partisan Warfare* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967), p. 17.

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On the Theory and Historic Heritage of Partisan Struggle

To varying degrees, Communist Party and Red Army leaders facing the daunting task of organising partisan warfare in the German armies' rear area knew of or had heard about the theoretical tenets of unconventional warfare which earlier military theorists had developed. In all fairness, however, it must be said that, before 1941, these leaders were pre-occupied primarily with reforming and strengthening the Red Army. Therefore, they scarcely bothered considering the necessity for conducting partisan warfare in the near future. In general, they rejected the feasibility of engaging in guerrilla-type popular war. Despite this fact, Soviet military publications issued on the eve of war did contain occasional references to this kind of warfare. For example, in an article in *Kommunisticheskii International* journal, A. Koplan analysed Chinese guerrillas' activities against the Japanese in 1940 and reminded readers about the heroic actions of Red partisans, who operated in Siberia during the Russian Civil War in Russia.¹

When considering the theoretical basis of partisan warfare, one must pay tribute to many well-known military strategists and theorists, including such famous figures as Suvorov, Napoleon, Mering, Leer, Clausewitz, and Davidoff. Their views, although often controversial are fairly well-known. Therefore, I believe it is equally essential to analyse the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Tukhachevsky, since their works and contributions to the subject, although also controversial, are less well appreciated.

MARX AND ENGELS ON PARTISAN WAR

For many cogent reasons, some scholars seriously question the contributions of Marx, Engels, and Lenin to the theory of partisan (guerrilla) warfare. For example, Walter Laqueur argues that, although Marx and Engels authored several volumes on military affairs, they rarely displayed serious interest in partisan war. He concludes that, 'It is one of the ironies of history that Marx and Engels, who showed little enthusiasm about the prospects of guerrilla warfare, nevertheless became the idols of subsequent generations of guerrillas.'² Such prominent scholars as Leon Fischer and John Erickson have also questioned Lenin's competency in military affairs.³

Despite this criticism, Marx and Engels did attempt to examine the subject of guerrilla warfare in many countries, although not equally, since the latter's works on the subject are far more voluminous than the former's. Marx and Engels concentrated on the Polish, Hungarian, and Tyrolean national insurrections, the popular movement by the Caucasian people against Russian Tsarist armies, the liberation struggle of the Algerian and Moroccan peoples, French resistance to the Prussians, and Garibaldi's popular struggle in Italy. For instance, in his 1849 article entitled 'The Defeat of the Piedmontians (March–April 1849)', Friedrich Engels stated that, owing to the vigorous actions of partisan detachments and their ability to operate everywhere, it was possible for a less powerful force to fight successfully against a stronger and better-equipped army. Engels concluded by declaring, 'The Spaniards proved it in 1807–1812, and the Hungarians are proving it now.'⁴

On the other hand, Karl Marx introduced a revolutionary element into guerrilla war. When evaluating the guerrilla warfare in April 1849, he wrote:

A nation fighting for its liberty ought not to adhere rigidly to the accepted rules of warfare. Mass uprisings, revolutionary methods, guerrilla bands everywhere; such are the only means by which a small nation can hope to maintain itself against an adversary superior in number and equipment. By their use, a weaker force can overcome its stronger and better-organised opponent.⁵

Today, in the aftermath of the collapse of Communism in the countries of Eastern Europe, it is quite natural that considerable criticism is being heaped on Marx, Engels, and Lenin, the founders of Marxism-Leninism. Nonetheless, their works and views should be

cautiously re-examined to determine what they actually wrote and whether it conformed to historical reality. I believe that such an approach will clearly indicate that they undoubtedly paid some attention to an analysis of war as a whole and to partisan warfare in particular. Admittedly, the depth, consistency, importance, and impact of this analysis certainly remain in question, and the number of critics of their work is increasing. However, their work deserves further analysis.

At the least, Marx and Engels considered 'small wars' or, more precisely, partisan warfare to be an important means by which workers could struggle for their so-called 'social liberation'. This dictum alone is now heavily criticised by many historians, including many in the countries that, at one time, constituted the Soviet Union. For example, in his work *The State of the Working People in Britain (September 1844–March 1845)*, Engels emphasised that the tactics of guerrilla warfare on the part of poor people against their rich antagonists was an integral part of the British proletariat's struggle for human rights.⁶

Marx and Engels also devoted considerable effort to analysing partisan fighting during the American Civil War (1861–65). This war included many vivid instances of guerrilla-type warfare. For example, Colonel John Mosby, the Confederate partisan of American Civil War fame, was a guerrilla leader who correctly understood the varied purposes of this kind of warfare. He fought in the rear and on the flanks of the Federal Army advancing on Richmond. Mosby attacked with a rather small force and never sought decisive battle. Instead, he tried to harass the enemy, strike quickly at railway lines, and, most important, he dispersed his force immediately after each assault. Often he engaged small enemy parties, and one of his most famous exploits was the kidnapping of Federal General Stoughton along with 100 of his men.⁷ Colonel Mosby understood that the best means by which reliable intelligence could be obtained was from the local populace and prisoners of war. This intelligence enabled him to strike repeated surprise blows while he and his force remained elusive. Mosby's employment of partisan tactics permitted his fighters to pin down numerically superior enemy forces.

When examining the history of the American Civil War, Marx stated that the war was caused by a clash of two opposing and contradictory political, economic, and social systems – capitalism prevalent in the North and slavery dominant in the South.⁸ In his article 'The Civil War in North America', which was published in the German newspaper *Die Presse* (No. 293) on 25 October 1861, he briefly mentioned the guerrilla

tactics the so-called Southern 'poor whites' employed, and he named this mode of fighting, 'pirate raids'.⁹

Marx and Engels paid considerable attention to the guerrilla war in Spain early in the century. This was quite important because thorough analysis of the Spaniards' use of unconventional means of warfare against Napoleon's Army was instructive, if not essential, to develop a correct understanding of this type of warfare. The partisan struggle of the Spanish people against Napoleon can be divided into three main periods. During the first period, the Spanish army could not effectively resist the French Army. Therefore, understanding that they could not continue a conventional struggle, the populations of whole provinces, as in Galicia and Asturias, took up arms and began using unconventional partisan tactics.

During the second period, the most significant of all three in terms of partisan warfare, guerrilla bands formed on the basis of the Spanish Army's remnants and Spanish deserters from the French armies. These partisans carried the struggle to the French as their own cause, independent of any influence from above. In other words, they fought on in their own interests. Commonly, guerrillas would stay out of sight of the vigilant enemy during the day in order to intercept an unsuspecting courier or to capture critical supplies. It was in this fashion that the younger Mina captured the Viceroy of Navarre, who had been appointed by Joseph Bonaparte, the new French-appointed King of Spain. As long as the guerrilla fighters organised themselves into small but manoeuvrable bands, they were extremely dangerous to the French. Suffice it to say that fortuitous events and circumstances frequently brought whole districts under guerrilla control.

The third period of the war was less productive in a guerrilla sense, although the number of guerrillas actually increased. During this period the guerrilla units tried to take on the trappings of regular army forces, and their ranks swelled to from 3,000 to 6,000 men. Unfortunately, the command of this army fell to leaders who used it for their own devices. This change in partisan organisation and, to a lesser extent, partisan tactics accorded the French many fresh advantages. For example, owing to their increased numerical strength, the guerrillas were less able to conceal themselves or suddenly disappear, without being forced into battle, as they had formerly done. Now, the French frequently overtook, defeated, or otherwise disabled the guerrilla force. Guerrilla warfare experience in Spain between 1807 and 1812 and during the later stages of the guerrilla war clearly indicates that the increase in the numerical

strength of partisan formations and their strict chain of command did not always improve their combat capabilities or quality.

In an article entitled 'The Guerrillas in Spain', which was published in the *New York Tribune* on 30 October 1854, Marx and Engels emphasised the correct tactics employed by Spanish partisans and the results those tactics achieved. They wrote:

As soon as the enterprise was completed, everybody went his own way, and armed men were soon scattering in all directions; but the associated peasants quietly returned to their common occupation without 'as much as their absence having been noticed'. Thus the communication on all roads was closed. Thousands of enemies were on the spot, though none could be discovered. No courier [French] could be dispatched without being taken; no supplies could set out without being intercepted; in short, no movement could be effected without being observed by a hundred eyes.¹⁰

While relating the Spanish experience of 1807–12, Marx appreciated the guerrilla hit-and-run tactics as a valuable tool. Historically, partisan tactics currently employed by many partisan organisations all over the world trace their roots to these earliest of partisan experiences. As Marx wrote in his cycle of articles entitled 'Revolutionary Spain' (1854), these tactics enabled partisans to maintain their centre of resistance 'everywhere and nowhere' at the same time.¹¹

On several occasions Engels stressed the importance of partisan warfare in the struggle of many nations for national independence. His short work entitled *Mountain War Then and Now* (1857) was very important from the standpoint of understanding the theoretical basis of unconventional warfare. In it he examined the history of the most important engagements in the Swiss and Austrian Alps, and he noted changes in military tactics in a mountain environment. He concluded that this region provided yet another venue for the conduct of defensive guerrilla warfare.¹² In still another work, entitled *The Liberation of Laknau* (1858), he declared that the strength of a national uprising is not expressed in 'decisive engagements, but instead in partisan warfare'.¹³ He expressed the same thought in his subsequent work, *The War with Moors* (1860).¹⁴

Engels also described the fighting by French irregular forces [*francs-tireurs*] during the Franco-Prussian War (1870–71), whose actions, on occasion, were noteworthy. French irregulars carried out many raids against Prussian supply convoys and trains, blew up an important bridge over the Moselle River, and interrupted Prussian rail traffic for 10 days.

Irregulars stubbornly attacked the enemy rear during and after the attacks on Strasbourg and Pfalzburg fortress. Finally, during the enemy advance on Paris, French partisans became particularly active.

To break the back of French popular resistance, the Prussians instituted a type of martial law and decreed that any town or village whose inhabitants fired on Prussian troops or generally assisted the French be burnt down. Further, the Prussians stated that any man found carrying weapons, who did not appear in their eyes to be a regular soldier, would be summarily shot. When suspicion existed that a considerable portion of a town's population had been guilty of such a misdeed, all men capable of bearing arms were to be massacred forthwith. Prussians surrounded the condemned villages, drove away the inhabitants, confiscated provisions and supplies, and set the houses on fire. They brought the real or imaginary culprits before courts martial, extracted brief, final confessions, and, finally, ended the affair with bullets. German newspapers described instances of such extreme cruelty but couched the actions in terms of military justice on the part of the executioners. The Prussians carried out these actions deliberately, systematically, and harshly to destroy the French irregulars.

However, while praising the activities of these French irregulars, on the whole, one must admit the fact that they were nothing more than a nuisance. Although the accomplishments of these irregulars did not match expectations, since their military function was never very well defined, their actions earned them everlasting fame in the memory of the French people. Therefore, from 1940–43, during the Nazi occupation of France, one of the largest resistance organisations operating in southern France assumed the name *Le Franc-Tireur* in their honour.¹⁵

In his subsequent articles, *The Struggle in France* (1870), Engels tried to determine the roots of French guerrilla fighting against the Prussians in 1870.¹⁶ Finally, in his work *The Chances of War* (1870) he articulated a sort of definition of partisan warfare, which he described as an 'elusive people's uprising'.¹⁷

The moral factor was always one of the most significant qualities for guerrilla fighters. Abundant evidence supports this fact. For example, in 1806 Prussia collapsed before the military power of Napoleon simply because nowhere in the country was there any sign of a national spirit of resistance. After 1807 administrators and reformers in the Prussian Army did all in their power to resurrect this national spirit. Coincidentally, this was at a time when Spanish resistance furnished a glorious example of how a nation could resist an invading army. Prussia's military

leaders considered the Spanish example worthy of emulation as they pondered how to resist Napoleon. Well-known Prussian military figures such as Gneisenau, Scharnhorst, and Clausewitz were all in favour of mass resistance. The former even travelled to Spain to take part in the struggle against Napoleon.

Thus, the entire Prussian military system represented an attempt to mobilise popular resistance against the French. Every man who was fit to do so had to join the final home reserve, the so-called *Landsturm*, whose function was to rise up in the rear and on the flanks of the enemy, to disrupt his movements, and to interdict his supplies and his communications.

Scharnhorst, the principal organiser of the modern Prussian Army, called for a spirit of irreconcilable national resistance among the populace. Accordingly, all resistance means were valid, and the most effective were considered the best. The overall result was indeed positive, although, in all fairness, the Prussians applied a double standard in this situation. The actions that Scharnhorst recommended were to be undertaken by the Prussians against the French. However, in 1870, when the French chose to behave in precisely the same fashion toward the Prussians, it became quite 'another matter'. What the Prussians defined as patriotism in the first instance, they later termed banditry and assassination.

Engels believed that the guerrilla fighters' morale was a very important factor in this type of war. (In fact, most would agree that it is essential for success in all types of warfare.) In an 1857 article published in the *New American Cyclopaedia* (Vol. 1, 1858), Engels analysed the French struggle in Algeria. He paid particular attention in the article to the stubborn Algerian resistance, which he argued was successful because of high guerrilla morale.¹⁸ He also believed that close co-operation between guerrilla formations and regular army units was a positive factor in conducting victorious guerrilla warfare.

This judgement applied also to partisan warfare in the Tyrol, where the Austrian Army supported the partisans against Napoleon's Army, and in Spain, where the Anglo-Portuguese Army supported the Spanish guerrillas.¹⁹ In his article 'The Strategy of War', which was published in the *New York Daily Tribune* on 15 June 1859, Engels examined the results of raid by Garibaldi's detachment against the Austrians in May 1859. He judged that the successes of Garibaldi, who the Austrians called the 'chieftain of robbers', were due to his talent, courage, and strict discipline.²⁰

Engels also discussed specific guerrilla tactics. He did so in two articles on the British fighting in India. The first, which was entitled 'The Uprising in India', was published in 1858 in the *New York Daily Tribune* (No. 5351, 15 June 1858), and the second, entitled 'The British Army in India', was published in the same newspaper on 26 June 1858. In the two articles, Engels stressed that manoeuvrability was a very important feature that characterised Indian guerrilla fighting. Speaking of Emir Shamil's successes in fighting against Russian Tsarist troops, Engels once again emphasised skilful evasion on the part of the mountaineers when they were about to be encircled by Russians forces and noted their ability to ambush the latter.²¹ When examining Garibaldi's successful operations, Engels concluded he achieved success, at least in part, because he was able to regroup his force within the shortest period of time, a capability Garibaldi had acquired from his extensive combat experience.²² In his article 'The Strategy of War', Engels stated that manoeuvrability was one of the main characteristics of modern guerrilla war.²³

It is axiomatic that the success of irregular units and their survival often depends on the degree of assistance provided them by the indigenous population. Engels emphasised this characteristic feature of guerrilla warfare in his article 'The Struggle in France', as he wrote:

The struggle is being carried on by recently mobilised troops whose inexperience makes them more or less irregular. Whenever they attempt to mass and fight in the open, they are easily defeated; but when they fight under the cover of villages and towns equipped with barricades and embrasures, it becomes evident that they are capable of offering serious resistance. They are encouraged to carry on this type of struggle, with night surprise attacks and other methods of guerrilla warfare, by proclamations and orders from the government, which also advise the population of the district in which they operate to give them all possible assistance.²⁴

Summarising Marx and Engels' efforts to examine the partisan struggle, their efforts were frequent. Moreover, they analysed and produced valuable concrete observations of many facets of partisan guerrilla war. They correctly concluded that, in some circumstances, guerrilla fighting could be the principal form of resistance, while in others it could be only a supplemental factor. They correctly argued that just goals associated with any struggle inevitably strengthened the fighting capabilities of the guerrilla and guerrilla resolve. During the course of con-

flict, these factors often translated into real material power. However, as a whole, they failed to develop any substantial written theory on this type of warfare, and it is difficult to find any sort of recommendations on how to wage such a war.

Therefore, in the light of this evidence, one must dispute the numerous Marxist historians who did all in their power to claim Engels and Marx enunciated elaborate and comprehensive theory on the conduct of partisan (guerrilla) warfare. For example, in his book entitled *On the Firm Basis of Marxism-Leninism*, Iu. Pavlov attempted to prove the 'great contributions' that Marx and Engels made to the development of a theory of partisan warfare by examining Marx's article 'The Civil War in the United States'. Contrary to Pavlov's intent, this article contained little if any theory on the problem. Marx did examine the overall military situation in the two warring states in general in an attempt to clarify the nature of the conflict.²⁵ Nevertheless, Pavlov cited Marx's views concerning the principal causes of the war, namely the antagonism between the slave and free-labour systems, and then tried disingenuously to connect this analysis to the subject of partisan warfare.²⁶

LENIN ON PARTISAN WAR

As the pre-eminent Bolshevik Party leader, Lenin's views on, appreciation of, and recommendations concerning partisan warfare varied over time. Clearly, his conclusions at any given time regarding partisan operations depended largely on the specific historical circumstances in Russia. For example, his attitude toward the missions of partisan groups during the revolutionary years of 1905–06 and during the Russian Civil War of 1918–20 were far from identical.

Many historians accuse Lenin of being a master of terrorism and a person who routinely supported acts of terror. For example, when commenting on Lenin's book on 'Partisan Warfare', Stefan Possony insisted that Lenin's understanding of the phenomenon of 'partisan war' had a special meaning: Thus:

The term 'partisan war' or 'partisan actions' is a euphemism. It does not mean 'guerrilla war' in the modern sense, but [instead] stands for terrorism, hold-ups and robberies . . . In reading Lenin's discourse, it should be remembered that, in practical terms, he was

advocating an alliance between revolution and crime: Lenin did, in fact, enter into agreements with criminal elements during the partisan warfare period.²⁷

Actually, Lenin supported terrorist acts at the beginning of the First Russian Revolution at the end of 1905 and in early 1906. For example, in September 1906 Lenin wrote an article in the newspaper *Proletarii*, which summed up the initial results of partisan operations during the revolution and attempted to formulate further tasks for this kind of fighting. In the article he noted that partisan warfare:

Pursues two different aims, which must be strictly distinguished from one another. In the first place, this struggle strives for the assassination of individuals, chiefs, and their subordinates in the Army and police; in the second place, it seeks to confiscate monetary funds from both the government and from private individuals.²⁸

Therefore, at that time and to a certain degree, Lenin aggressively supported such harsh tactics. But, at the same time, there were also clearly definable periods when he renounced terrorism as a productive form of struggle, proclaiming that terrorist acts only led to further damaging Bolshevik Party isolation. For example, several years before the First Russian Revolution, when the Party was struggling against the *narodniki*, who were members of a Russian populist movement who often engaged in terrorist acts, Lenin invited his like-minded comrades to refrain from terrorism. In his work *What to Begin With?*, which appeared in 1901, Lenin wrote, 'Principally we have never abandoned and we simply cannot abandon terror.' But under the existing conditions, he added, 'We decisively declare such a form of struggle as inopportune.'²⁹

In his February 1906 work entitled *The Current Situation in Russia and the Tactics of the Workers' Party*, Lenin attempted to distinguish acts of terror from partisan fighting. He wrote, 'Terror was vengeance to some individuals. Terror was a conspiracy of intellectual groups. Terror was absolutely not connected with any mood of the masses . . . Partisan actions are not terror but instead are military operations.'³⁰ Subsequently, Lenin summed up the experiences of the October–December 1905 struggle in a pamphlet he wrote in March 1906 entitled *The Victory of the Cadets and the Tasks of the Workers' Party*.³¹ In this pamphlet he recognised the October–December battles as a memorable step in the

revolutionary struggle, which exploited the tactics of combining a mass political strike with an armed uprising.

At the beginning of April 1906, Lenin left for Stockholm to attend the Fourth (Unity) Congress of the RSDRP [Russian Socialist Democratic Workers' Party], which commenced on 10 April in the People's House. In addition to delivering reports to the Congress on the agrarian question and on 'The Current Situation and the Class Tasks of the Proletariat', Lenin also presented his point of view concerning the issue of armed uprisings and on the question of Party organisation.

In August 1906, while analysing the initial phase of the First Russian Revolution, Lenin wrote an article entitled, 'The Lessons of the Moscow Uprising', which was published on 29 August in *Proletarii*. In this article he supported mass terror conducted by proletarian armed groups, and, at the same time, he emphasised the employment of 'the new barricade tactics', an idea which had previously been proposed by Karl Kautsky.³² The essence of the 'new barricade tactics' involved the employment of very small partisan groups, consisting of a maximum of 10 or even two or three individuals.³³ Although the strength of volunteer worker-fighters had clearly been inadequate to the revolutionary task, Lenin concluded that the experiences gained from the uprising were positive, and that they should be generalised throughout among the popular masses. It is interesting to note that 14 years later, in 1920, and at a time when the Russian Civil War was nearing its end, Lenin met with J. Friis, the Norwegian Workers' Party leader, and declared, 'We [Bolsheviks] always were against individual terror.'³⁴ Clearly, over the years Lenin's statements and views were not consistent.

Lenin analysed partisan warfare primarily through the prism of events that occurred during the First Russian Revolution (1905–07). He categorically stated that those revolutionary events predetermined the future employment of partisan warfare and other means of struggle available to the Russian working class. In an editorial article to the newspaper, *Proletarii* (No. 2, June 1905), Lenin concluded that, given local Russian conditions at that time, partisan warfare was simply 'indispensable'.³⁵ At the same time, however, he did not think that partisan warfare was a universal, radical, or exclusive means of struggle. He wrote about the phenomenon of partisan warfare in an article entitled 'The Current Situation in Russia and Tactics of the Workers' Party', which was published on 7 February 1906. In it he indicated that if partisan warfare was well co-ordinated with other means of fighting, it could be rather useful for the Russian proletariat in its struggle against Tsarism.³⁶ In the

same article, Lenin attempted to explain that partisan activity and terrorism were entirely different actions, stating, 'Partisan actions are not vengeance but are instead military activity.'³⁷ He treated the vexing problem of procuring arms for the initial partisan units during the beginning of the October 1905 Revolution rather simply. In an October 1905 letter addressed 'To the Combat Committee of Saint Petersburg's Committee', Lenin spoke about procuring arms for partisan personnel, suggesting that they should get arms themselves, each fighter as best he could.³⁸ Finally, Lenin insisted that any credible effort to conduct partisan warfare required well-trained combat fighters.

In March 1906 Lenin prepared the draft resolutions for the Fourth Party Congress, in which he worked out a special paragraph on partisan operations. The newspaper, *Partiinye izvestiia* [Party News], then published the draft resolution. In it he concluded that the partisan form of warfare must be conducted actively with the intention 'of destroying the governmental, police and military apparatus' of the existing regime.³⁹ Several months later, in an August 1906 newspaper article entitled 'To the Events of the Day', he assessed the nature of ongoing revolutionary events. To Lenin, incidents such as the 'bloody days' in Warsaw and other Polish cities, the attempt to assassinate Russian Prime Minister Stolypin, and other terrorist acts had awakened the 'just interest' of many people in partisan fighting. He promised to elaborate on this 'very important question' in the near future.⁴⁰

He did so in September 1906 in his short book entitled 'Partisan Warfare'. This slim volume is quite instructive in the understanding of his approach to the problem of guerrilla war. In it he sought to prove that partisan actions at that time in Russia were justified by the deep economic and social crises that plagued the Tsarist regime, crises the regime could not overcome. In Lenin's words, 'The intensification of the political crisis to the point of an armed struggle and, in particular, the intensification of poverty, hunger, and unemployment in town and country are one of the important causes of the struggle we are describing.'⁴¹

Lenin also paid considerable attention to the problem of controlling partisan operations. He argued for strict, unconditional Party control over this form of struggle, and he said the Party was to blame if partisan groups acted in uncontrolled fashion. Accordingly, he wrote:

It is not partisan actions that disorganise the movement, but rather the weakness of the Party, which is incapable of taking such actions

under their control. That is why the criticisms that we Russians usually hurl against partisan activities really do disorganise the Party. Being incapable of understanding those historical conditions that give rise to this struggle, we are incapable of neutralising its deleterious effects. Yet the struggle is going on. It is engendered by powerful economic and political causes. It is not in our power to eliminate these causes or to eliminate this struggle. Our complaints against partisan warfare are complaints against our own Party's weakness in the matter of an uprising.⁴²

However, some evidence exists that Lenin himself ignored national conditions as an important factor for successful partisan warfare. Concerning this issue, he stated:

In this respect, allusion is often made to the peculiarities of national conditions. But very clearly, this allusion betrays the weakness of the current argument. If it is a matter of national conditions, then it is not a matter of anarchism, Blanquism, or terrorism – sins that are common to Russia as a whole and even to the Russians in particular – but rather [a matter] of something else.⁴³

In these and other works, Lenin emphasised yet another essential precondition for success in partisan war, specifically, good ties between partisan fighters and the broader mass of the local populace. He argued that the scale of partisan operations must also correlate with the morale of the majority of the indigenous population.⁴⁴ Later, many Soviet historians frequently cited Lenin's 1906 dictum that partisan operations must be brought under 'strict Party control' as an obligatory element of this kind of warfare.⁴⁵ This dictum of Lenin found its way into many publications, not only related to the events of the First Russian Revolution, but also at the height of the Great Patriotic War of 1941–45, many years after his death.

To a lesser extent, Lenin identified and discussed other aspects of partisan warfare in many other pamphlets. These included 'The Missions of the Revolutionary Army's Detachments', 'The Russian Revolution and the Mission of the Proletariat', 'The Dissolution of the Duma and the Missions of the Proletariat', 'The Lessons of the Moscow Uprising', and several others.

At the 3rd Party Congress, which was held in April and May 1905,

Lenin insisted that the Party organise 'combat groups to form the basis for a successful struggle with Tsarism'. These combat groups, which were to be attached to all Party organisations, employed tactics that had much in common with partisan warfare. Subsequently, the Party activated such groups in Moscow, Kiev, Rostov-on-the-Don, Baku, Odessa, Riga, Novorossiisk, Vitebsk, Gomel, Orsha, and many other cities. Simultaneously, Lenin paid considerable attention to the organisational structure and combat training of fledgling partisan units. He initiated the formation of a special 'Combat Group of the St Petersburg Committee of the RSDRP', an organ whose responsibilities included the selection of personnel necessary to carry out combat activities, small arms training for all unit personnel, weapons procurement, and so on.⁴⁶

The increased likelihood that a combat uprising would occur prompted the Bolsheviks to issue new special regulations for the use of their 'combat groups'. Specifically, in order to train their 'combat groups', in 1905 the Bolsheviks issued special regulations entitled 'The Organisational Chart of Combat Formations', 'On Tactics', 'A Short Course in Street Fighting', 'Selected Articles Concerning Small Arms Fire', 'Techniques for High Explosives', and several others. Lenin also believed that voluntary recruitment was one of the most important factors in the conduct of successful partisan warfare. For example, in his pamphlet *The Dissolution of the Duma and the Tasks of Proletariat*, which was published in July 1906 by the publisher Novaia volna [New Wave], Lenin wrote that the partisan groups should be nothing more than 'voluntary unions of people from the same trade, factory', etc.⁴⁷

During the revolutionary days of 1905–06, Lenin was optimistic that partisan fighting could develop into a full civil war. He pursued his optimism in a newspaper article entitled, 'The Political Uprising and Street Fighting in Moscow', which was published on 17 October 1905 in the newspaper *Proletarii*. While analysing the ongoing revolutionary events, he stated, 'The situation is extremely tense . . . The civil war has assumed the form of desperately persistent and universal partisan warfare'.⁴⁸ Less than a year later, in September 1906 in his book *Partisan Warfare*, he again wrote favourably about the possibility of a civil war in Russia. He declared:

A Marxist bases himself on the class struggle and not social peace. In certain periods of acute economic and political crisis, the class struggle ripens into a direct civil war, i.e., into an armed struggle between two segments of people. During such periods a Marxist is

obliged to take the stand for civil war. Any moral condemnation of civil war would be absolutely impermissible from the perspective of a Marxist.⁴⁹

Of course, all that has been said above does not mean that Lenin developed a special theory concerning how partisan fighting could be transformed into a universal civil war. Lenin's intent was only to explain how revolutionary-minded individuals could fight. In so doing, he clearly demonstrated that, in 1906, during the First Russian Revolution, the partisan form of warfare was very popular in Russia, and that it was advisable for the revolutionary masses to employ it. That is why it would be incorrect to accept the views of many former Soviet historians such as Pavlov, for example, that Lenin, 'accurately grounded [his] theory on the possibility that partisan actions could make the transition into civil war'.⁵⁰ Iu. Pavlov also criticised Walter Laqueur's so-called attempts 'to ascribe to Lenin' ideas about the co-operation of the Russian working people during the Revolution of 1905–07 'with criminal elements'.⁵¹

Some historians, including Walter Laqueur, are absolutely right in concluding that Lenin accomplished the bulk of his theoretical study of partisan warfare during the First Russian Revolution in 1905–06.⁵² However, it is also necessary to note that this form of fighting was employed rather extensively during the Russian Civil War in 1918–20. Despite the fact that during the Civil War Lenin did not generalise about the experience of Red partisans in special publications as he had done in 1906 in his work *Partisan Warfare*, nonetheless he did pay sufficient attention to this form of fighting. Specifically, he personally prepared several guiding documents for the fledgling Soviet State regarding partisan activity.

Documents on partisan warfare that Lenin prepared during the Russian Civil War were quite important since many partisan units were, in fact, large scale formations called armies. These armies clearly needed guiding regulations. For example, in the autumn of 1919, Mamontov's partisan army numbering 30,000 guerrilla fighters operated in the Altai district of Siberia. Sztetinkin's army of 15,000 men operated in the Enisei district of Siberia, Kravchenko's and Kalandarishvili's army of 25,000 men fought in the Irkutsk region, and smaller guerrilla bands also operated elsewhere in Siberia.⁵³

The Bolshevik's extensive reliance on unconventional warfare tactics during the 1917 October Revolution gave impetus to a more widespread understanding of the phenomenon of partisan warfare during the Civil

War period. In his analysis of the extensive Bolshevik employment of large partisan units during the Russian Civil War, John Armstrong indicates:

The 'regular' armies of the Reds and their various opponents were in a state of reorganisation; the armies' training was inadequate, and the arms were far below the standard of Western European military forces of the period. In addition, the rapidly fluctuating fronts and the enormous extent of the theatres of military operations placed a premium on swift, stealthy manoeuvres. Under these circumstances, irregular forces were very useful militarily.⁵⁴

Lenin well understood that scattered partisan detachments had to be placed under strict centralised control. To do so, he activated the Central Headquarters of Partisan Detachments, which was directly responsible to the Operations Division of the People's Commissariat for Military and Naval Affairs. After the Russian delegation headed by G. Sokolnikov signed the Brest-Litovsk peace treaty with Germany on 3 March 1918, the Bolsheviks devoted considerable attention to the development of a regular Red Army. They then reorganised the Central Headquarters of Partisan Detachments into the Special Intelligence Division of the same People's Commissariat. Subordination of all partisan units to this controlling body was obligatory. One proclamation to the Ukrainian partisans in summer 1919 stated that, 'All detachments that do not recognise and are not subordinated to the command of the Revolutionary Military Council will be considered to be enemy units.'⁵⁵ To provide reliable support and assistance to partisan forces, the Special Intelligence Division created a specialised short-term school for demolition specialists. Front-line guerrillas attended this educational establishment for military and technical training and also for political indoctrination.

Beneath the Central Headquarters, the next lower command echelon tasked with controlling partisan activities in the enemy rear was the regional party bureau, which reported directly to the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party. Between 1918 and 1920, the Bolsheviks organised bureaus for the Central, Siberian, Don, Far Eastern, and *Zafrontovoe* (literally, beyond the front)), Caucasian, and other regions. They assigned these bureaus the missions of assisting partisan units and directing their operations. Of course, sometimes the mission of control was symbolic since the Party structure could interfere in any way to influence partisan activity.

At times, Lenin himself took part in the development of guiding documents regarding partisan operations. For example, on 18 July 1919, he supported a motion for the Organisational Bureau [*Orgburo*] of the Bolshevik Party Central Committee to adopt a special resolution entitled 'Concerning the Partisan Detachments of Siberia'. The following day, on 19 July 1919, the same *Orgburo*, which Lenin chaired, adopted a more detailed resolution with almost with the same name, 'Concerning the Siberian Partisan Detachments'. The latter mandated that guerrilla units in Siberia should 'maintain continuous communication', and must be under 'centralised control'.

This intense organisational activity on the part of the Bolsheviks contrasted sharply with the chaos that often governed the operations of the numerous White guerrilla bands. This was readily apparent in Siberia. There, savage bands led by such odious commanders (really bandits) as Kalmykov, the Ataman of the Ussuri Cossacks, Semenov, a Cossack, partly of Mongol extraction, and Baron Ungern-Shternberg, fought without centralised control and systematically terrorised, robbed, and looted the local population. General Graves, whose American forces occupied Eastern Siberia, observed events in Siberia, evaluated Kalmykov's activity, and stated that he was the 'worst scoundrel I ever seen or heard of'.⁵⁶

Initially, the Bolsheviks planned to employ Red partisan units only in defensive actions and intelligence collection activities. Tactically, partisan units operated independent of interference from regular army commands but maintained contacts with regular forces. Partisans were subordinate to individual revolutionary committees, and, when such bodies did not exist, they reported directly to local Soviets [Councils] and Party organisations. The Party committees, local Soviets, and Party organisations were to arm and equip the guerrillas, choose their command personnel, and guarantee that larger-scale guerrilla units would remain mobile to retain their effectiveness. Quite naturally, all of these measures were taken to ensure that partisan warfare was conducted strictly in the interests of Soviet power so that 'the small war' was integrated with the political aspects of the overall struggle. As Lenin had said, the Party and other Soviet authorities, exclusively, were to direct the partisan war. Lenin analysed the course of the Civil War and formulated future partisan combat missions in his report to the Plenum of the All-Russian Central Council of Trade Unions, which he delivered on 11 April 1919. He emphasised, 'We have solved the first military mission confronting us by the same partisan irregular uprising.'⁵⁷

Meanwhile, some Red partisan detachments were actively engaged against British, American, and French troops landed in Russia, and they achieved substantial results. For example, on 12 September 1919, William Bullitt, a US State Department representative, reported to the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee about the results of his 1919 tour of the Soviet Russia. The report contained his memorandum to Colonel House, dated 30 January 1919, which mentioned the pressure Red Army and Red partisans were placing on Allied troops in the northern sector of Soviet Russia. The memorandum stated:

The 12,000 American, British, and French troops at Archangel are no longer serving any useful purpose. Only 3,000 Russians have rallied around this force. It [the Russian force] is the attacked and not the attacker, and it serves merely to create cynicism regarding all of our proposals and to stimulate recruiting for the Red Army. Furthermore, the 4,000 American, 6,000 British, 2,000 French, and 3,000 Russian troops in this region are in considerable danger of destruction by the Bolsheviks.⁵⁸

During the Civil War, Lenin himself evaluated the capabilities of individual partisan commanders and also sometimes personally appointed them. In his memoirs the prominent Bolshevik, Shaumian, cited such an example in August 1919. At that time Lenin appointed Ter-Petrosian who, under the nickname of 'Kamo', was a well-known and highly experienced member of the Bolshevik underground, as the head of a special detachment formed by the Moscow Military District to conduct partisan operations in the rear of General Denikin's White forces. A special warrant was printed, which stated that Lenin personally knew the warrant's bearer. All Soviets and military organisations in the detachment's operational area had to render to it 'full confidence and all possible support'.⁵⁹ Lenin met with other prominent guerrilla leaders of the Civil War period, including Goloshchekin, I'lin-Zhenevsky, Shumiatsky, Smirnov, D. Kiselev, Vilensky-Sibiriakov, Iangildin, and several other organisers of the partisan warfare. The main topic of discussion during such meetings was the nature of partisan warfare.

Often Lenin recommended that the heads of local Soviets and executive committees use partisan activities in support of the Soviet power. One instance occurred in February 1919 when the German Kaiser's forces violated the Brest-Litovsk armistice by launching a large-scale offensive along the entire Russian-German front. Lenin received a telegram from Urban, the Chairman of the Drissa city Soviet in Vitebsk

province [*gubernia*], notifying him that the town had been occupied by Germans forces on 19 February 1919. Lenin responded to Urban by telegraph with the following cryptic order: 'Render all possible resistance. Remove all valuables and foodstuffs. The rest must be destroyed. Do not leave anything to the enemy. Dismantle the railway lines – two kilometres for each ten kilometres of railway. Demolish the bridges. Lenin.'⁶⁰ On 21 February 1919, Lenin sent an almost identical cable to Ia. Anvel't, the chairman of the Estonian [*Estliandskoi*] District Executive Committee.⁶¹

One additional aspect of Lenin's attitude to the problem of partisan warfare during the Russian Civil War is worthy of mention. As Erickson noted in his work *Lenin as Civil War Leader*, '[G]uerrilla war and military free-booting held little appeal for Lenin.'⁶² In fact, the leader of the newly born Soviet State did not always defend guerrilla tactics nor did he adhere to them. Although he considered partisan operations as an important instrument in the struggle for the Socialist State, he believed that the regular Red Army had to bear the brunt of the struggle. In his view, partisan activity simply augmented regular army actions and was clearly subordinate to the Red Army. While defending this view, he sharply criticised so-called 'Left Communists' who tended to overestimate the capabilities of partisan bands. On 4 July 1918, in his final speech at the 5th All-Russian Congress of Soviets, Lenin addressed the left Social Revolutionaries (SRs),⁶³ stating, 'For every soldier, your calls for the activation of the partisan units to fight against the regular imperialist army are ridiculous.'⁶⁴

In fact, at that time, what the Red Army needed most was centralised control and strict discipline. Lenin well understood that the organisational basis of the new Red Army could not be of a partisan nature. Leon Trotsky, one of the architects of the Red Army, supported Lenin's organisational approach, while Old Bolsheviks such as Stalin and Voroshilov objected to it. Trotsky declared that the partisan movement was a valid and even necessary means of struggle but only in the early phase of the Civil War. Thereafter, he claimed, during the course of war it had an increasingly negative effect on the revolution, since partisan forces lacked discipline on the one hand and proper organisation on the other.⁶⁵ Thus, both Lenin and Trotsky clearly understood that a well-trained and well-organised regular army rather than an enthusiastic mass of partisans was necessary to maintain the Bolsheviks' hold on power.

Therefore, Lenin vehemently objected to the slogan used extensively by the 'Left Communists', which spoke of waging 'revolutionary field

partisan warfare'. The SRs frequently used this slogan both before and after the Bolsheviks signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with Germany. The left SRs, or, as they were called, the 'Left Communists', did not want Russia to sign what they considered (and what they openly called) a 'humiliating' treaty, and they thought it possible to fight the Germans primarily by revolutionary partisan forces. Bukharin, at that time a leading left Social Revolutionary leader, admitted that the other leaders in the left SR faction even wanted to arrest Lenin and form their own revolutionary cabinet.⁶⁶

From January 1918 until 3 March 1918, the date the treaty was signed, Lenin and his associates spoke out against the position of the 'Left Communists', whose spokesmen were such prominent figures in the Communist movement as Bukharin, Uritsky, Smirnov, Osinsky, and others. As early as January 1918, Osinsky had already articulated the SR view. He stated that, when fighting the armies of the bourgeois states (first and foremost he meant Germany), military formations of workers would demoralise the enemy, combat operations would 'resemble partisan warfare', and, in general, 'revolutionary war' would be nothing more than 'an international revolution in the field'.⁶⁷

On 7 March 1918, Bukharin, who was killed in prison in 1938 on Stalin's orders, went public with his disagreement with Lenin over the role of partisan war in the conflict with Germany. In an article in the left SR newspaper, *Communist*, he wrote, 'It was useful for Lenin to describe revolutionary war solely as a war of large armies with engagements taking place according to the principles of military strategy. However, we declare that the war on our side will inevitably be of a partisan nature with the participation of flying detachments.'⁶⁸ Spiridonova, the leader of the left SRs, officially declared, 'We do not recognise the Red Army. We shall continue to struggle against the counterrevolution by nothing more than partisan detachments.'⁶⁹ On 15 March 1918, on the eve of the 4th All-Russian Extraordinary Congress of Soviets that ratified the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, an editorial in *Communist*, which opposed signing the treaty, likewise defended the idea of continuing combat operations by means of 'partisan warfare'.⁷⁰

The decisions of the 4th Congress of Soviets, which in general supported Lenin's platform concerning the problem of war with Germany, was of immense significance to the destiny of future Soviet Russia. The defeat of the left SRs meant defeat of the entire Social Revolutionary Party and its subsequent fragmentation into many factions. Nevertheless, the left SRs continued openly to defend their

views on the prolongation of war and the necessity for escalating partisan activity, and they consistently opposed the idea of forming a regular Red Army.

This split within the SR Party was one of the reasons why the harsh Russian Civil War exacted a toll of about 13 million human lives. While the 5th All-Russian Congress of Soviets was conducting its deliberation from 4–10 July 1918, Cherepanov, one of the leading figures of the left SRs, once again proclaimed the slogan, 'Long live the partisan detachments!'⁷¹ Consistent to their beliefs, on 6 July 1918, the left SRs began an armed mutiny in Moscow, which the Bolsheviks then forcibly suppressed.

When speaking in favour of creation of a regular Red Army, Lenin also criticised the so-called 'military opposition', within the revolutionary parties, which had formed by the beginning of the 8th Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik) Congress, held from 18–23 March 1919. The 'Left Communists', V. Smirnov, G. Safarov, G. Piatakov, and others who had suffered merciless criticism at the 7th Party Congress, represented the nucleus of this 'military opposition'. The centre of the 'military opposition' was supported by 40 delegates of the 8th Party Congress, including such prominent communists such as Bubnov, Voroshilov, Aleksandrov, Goloschekin, Zemliachka, Miasnikov, and Iaroslavsky. As a whole, the 'military opposition' advocated the formation of a regular Red Army on the basis of existing partisan formations, that is, on the so-called principle of '*partisanshchina*' (guerrilla-ism). In his speech at the Congress, Lenin invited the members of the 'military opposition' to consider current circumstances and realistic requirements associated with the formation of a regular army. He vehemently argued that, while guerrilla warfare had been materially assisting in the struggle against White Guard forces, of necessity, the Red Army had to be a professional force with strict discipline and without resort to '*partisanshchina*'.⁷²

On several occasions Lenin underscored the indisputable fact that the spirit of '*partisanshchina*' in the regular army, if only its traces and remnants, had caused many defeats and much suffering, including the loss of many lives and valuable material. He expressed these concerns most thoroughly in his, 'Letter Concerning the Victory Over Kolchak', which he wrote in August 1919.⁷³

Summing up Lenin's activity during the Civil War, one can reach the following conclusion. In spite of the irrefutable fact that Lenin paid considerable attention to partisan warfare during the Russian Civil War, he

failed to make any significant theoretical contributions to the subject. These conclusions obviously contradict the views and statements of many Russian historians. Nevertheless, Walter Laqueur, who was severely criticised in the works of many Soviet historians in the 1970s and 1980s, was essentially correct. When evaluating Lenin's relationship to the problem, he accurately wrote:

More than any other major revolutionaries of his generation, Lenin studied military strategy and organization and, of course, the art of revolution. But although he had much of account to say about revolutionary situations and the proper tactics to be employed in each, he certainly offered no new and startling advice on guerrilla warfare. He was more favourably inclined toward it than other radical socialists, but that is saying very little indeed.⁷⁴

These words do not undermine the reputation or stature of Lenin as a prominent leader in the newly born Soviet State, who often fought against the overly drastic measures of his opponents. Lenin was an object of sympathy as a capable and essentially truthful man to many people both in Russia and abroad. The description of Lenin provided by John Reed, a US correspondent in Russia during the revolution, exemplified this sympathy.⁷⁵ Likewise, the American diplomat, William Bullitt, who met Lenin in 1919, stated,

When I called on Lenin at the Kremlin, I had to wait a few minutes until a delegation of peasants left his room. They had heard in their village that Comrade Lenin was hungry. And they had come hundreds of miles carrying 800 poods of bread as the gift of the village to Lenin.⁷⁶ Just before them was another delegation of peasants to whom the report had come that Comrade Lenin was working in an unheated room. They came bearing a stove and enough firewood to heat it for three months. Lenin is the only leader who receives such gifts. And he turns them into the common fund. Face to face, Lenin is a very striking man – straightforward and direct, but also genial and with much humour and serenity.⁷⁷

Thus, it is entirely reasonable to agree with Gefter, the contemporary Russian historian, who, when pondering the recent attacks on Lenin and his theoretical heritage in a television interview, remarked that many secrets of Lenin as a great man had accompanied him when he died. It will indeed be extremely difficult for scholars to unearth these lost but revealing secrets.⁷⁸

THEORY AND HERITAGE OF PARTISAN STRUGGLE

At the same time, despite of the lack of voluminous theoretical pronouncements on partisan (guerrilla) warfare in Lenin's articles and speeches, one cannot deny the fact that his writings had an enormous impact on partisan fighting in many areas of the globe. They also clearly influenced several generations of both Marxist and pseudo-Marxist revolutionaries.

TUKHACHEVSKY ON PARTISAN WAR

During the inter-war years, many Soviet military theorists, including Frunze, Tukhachevsky, Antonov-Ovseenko, Iakir, and Kamenev, further developed Soviet theories of partisan warfare. The first of these was Frunze, who was appointed Soviet People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs in January 1925 (a rank which is equivalent to the US Secretary of Defence) less than five years after the Russian Civil War ended. Frunze insisted that detailed and substantive analysis of the so-called 'small war' continue. He was convinced that partisan actions could place enemy armies in such a situation that, even with their clear technical advantages, they would be helpless when confronting a comparatively poorly armed, but aggressive, bold, and decisive enemy.⁷⁹

However, the Soviet military leadership did not promote partisan tactics extensively. The reason they did not do so was quite obvious. Since the losing party in a war usually resorts to partisan warfare, Stalin could not afford to make the defeatist admission to the general public or to numerous military officials that he expected to lose considerable Soviet territory in the event of future war. If the Kremlin authorities had widely disseminated instructions for partisan warfare prior to 1941, it would have represented a tacit admission that the Red Army could not defend the Socialist State. At that time, such admissions were quite impossible.

Nevertheless, some theorists and authors did quietly analyse partisan warfare actions during the Russian Civil War period. The most significant of these authors and books were Valk's *Malaia voina* [Small war], published in Moscow in 1919; Kartigin's *Partisanstvo: opyta analiza* [Guerrilla warfare: experience of analysis], published in Khar'kov in 1924; and Drobov's *Malaia voina: partisanstvo i diversiia* [Guerrilla war and diversionary actions], published in Moscow in 1929.

Another Soviet military theorist who dealt with the problem of partisan fighting was Marshal of the Soviet Union M.N. Tukhachevsky, who

suffered a tragic fate at Stalin's hands in 1937. Tukhachevsky fought in the Russian Army during the First World War, was captured in 1915, but escaped from his prisoner of war camp in 1917. After the Russian October Revolution, he joined the Bolsheviks and, owing to his keen organisational talents, achieved great prominence. During the Russian Civil War, Tukhachevsky earned a favourable reputation on the Eastern Front, and, in 1920, he commanded Russian Western Front forces in the war against the Poles. In 1934 he reached the vaunted rank of deputy of the People's Commissar for Defence of the Soviet Union.

Tukhachevsky was recognised as the leading and most famous advocate of Red Army reform, expansion, and rearmament, and he wanted to create of service arms for aviation, mechanised, and airborne forces. He also expanded the Soviet military education system and established new higher-level military educational institutions for Soviet senior officers. While praised as one of the originators of modern Soviet military doctrine, some Russian military historians claim Tukhachevsky was one of the greatest, if not the greatest, military figure produced by the Red Army up to that time. In happier circumstances, he might also have become the leader of a military and political revival in the Soviet Union.

Regrettably, having been found guilty of treason, Tukhachevsky was executed on Stalin's orders in June 1937. As ridiculous as it seems today, in the late 1930s purges, many Soviet military figures were accused of being 'enemy spies' and shared his gruesome fate.⁸⁰ While under arrest and confined to an NKVD torture-chamber, he courageously resisted many charges made against him including his supposed participation in a plot to assassinate Stalin. The most telling proof was that he was forced to sign his so-called confession in his personnel file, which still contains papers stained with his blood.⁸¹ The whole Tukhachevsky affair characterised the internal political situation in the Soviet Union during that period. On the eve of the Second World War, Stalin harshly and effectively repressed many prominent military leaders whose authority among the Soviet people and in the Red Army had increased dramatically since the end of the Russian Civil War. Tukhachevsky and his colleagues, Iakir, Uborevich, and others, were true professionals. Their independent spirit and their willingness to criticise such 'old school' military men as Voroshilov and Budenny, who failed to appreciate the need to create a modern army, prompted Stalin's suspicions and the subsequent tragic repression. Characteristically, Stalin's response was to remove all potentially threatening military leaders from the Army and physically destroy them. Official figures published in the

USSR during the period of *glasnost* indicate that the purges affected 43,000 officers, including many generals. In total during 1937 and 1938 three out of five marshals, 15 out of 16 army commanders, 60 out of 67 corps commanders, and 136 of 199 division commanders were condemned and shot.⁸² In other words, the Red Army was essentially decapitated on the eve of German aggression. The majority of those executed had been active fighters for the young Soviet state, who defended it selflessly during the Russian Civil War in Russia, and had fought in the ranks of the Red Guards and Red Army since their creation. Most of the condemned had matured from organisers and commanders of comparatively small units to army and *front* command, while others had achieved prominence in senior political and staff positions. Former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev later termed this genuine tragedy 'a lesson for all generations'.⁸³

During his career Marshal of the Soviet Union Mikhail Nikolaevich Tukhachevsky authored more than 120 published works, including several volumes containing his thoughts on the problems of fighting the banditry, which thrived after the Russian Civil War. He earned a well-deserved reputation as one of the originators of the theory of modern counterinsurgency.⁸⁴ He dealt with this subject in two articles. The first, entitled 'The Eradication of Banditry', was published in June 1922 in the journal *Revolutsiia i voina* [Revolution and war] (No. 6, pp. 40–7). The second, entitled 'The Struggle Against Counterrevolutionary Uprisings', appeared in 1926 in three issues of journal *Voina i revoliutsiia* [War and revolution] (No. 7, pp. 3–7; No. 8, pp. 3–15; and No. 9, pp. 3–16).⁸⁵

As a basis for his analysis, Tukhachevsky examined three cases of banditry in Russia after the end of the Civil War. These cases seemed to typify the problems encountered in dealing with partisan tactics. The typical cases were:

- (a) Peasant uprisings against Soviet power such as that which took place in the Tambov region where 'Kulaks' [landed peasants] instigated partisan actions;
- (b) Actions of armed bands which were supplied by weapons from abroad, such as those operating in area of the Belorussian-Polish border where insurgents often received arms from Poland; and
- (c) Nationalist uprisings typical of Russian Central Asia, such as the Basmachi movement in the Fergana District of Turkestan.⁸⁶

In general, the insurgents' goals in these partisan-type activities were to

reduce Red Army forces to a state of strategic exhaustion, to impel them to disperse their garrisons and detached units, to inflict maximum losses on them by repeated surprise attacks, and to demoralise and undermine their will to resist. While the intent of Red Army formations was always clear and their dispositions were always visible and, hence, known, the location and intent of the partisan bands was seldom apparent. To defeat the Red Army garrisons and detached units, the insurgents often formed sizeable detachments and launched large-scale raids. They conducted these raids to capture arms and supplies, to expand their scope and scale of operations, and to extend their power and authority to neighbouring regions.

The trump card of anti-Soviet partisan tactics was the partisans' ability to achieve surprise. The partisans' ability to conceal their intent and dispositions accorded them huge advantage, and, as a result, they often confronted Red Army units unexpectedly and on terrain unsuited for operations by regular army forces. The friendly population assisted partisan intelligence gathering, and the favourite partisan stratagems were ambushes, flanking movements, and, in case of temporary military defeat, the rapid dispersal of their forces into the rugged countryside. All the while, partisan forces carried out extensive training programmes, and they struck fear in their opponents by dealing savagely with captured Red Army soldiers.

Quite naturally, partisan forces that were active across the vast expanses of post-Civil War Russia evidenced a wide range of varying characteristics depending on the nature of the area of operations and the causes (natural, political, social, or religious) that gave rise to popular dissatisfaction. Thus, for example, significant differences existed between partisan movements in the Ukraine and Central Asia. On the whole, however, as diverse as these groups were, their activities bore one common characteristic; each involved effective anti-Soviet partisan activities.

Tukhachevsky believed that the struggle against such partisan movements was extremely difficult because the movements' roots were secret and persistent and their forces were difficult to detect and engage. However, bandit formations also had their weaknesses. Chief among these was their limited ability to obtain arms and supplies either from the Red Army or from other sources. Tukhachevsky carefully distinguished between the struggle in cities and the fight in the countryside. He stated that, while speedy concentration of necessary forces and equipment could easily liquidate partisan forces in an urban area by exploiting the technical superiority of modern weaponry, it was far harder to do so in a

village or rural venue. He insisted that, while military actions employing air forces and artillery were necessary to liquidate a peasant uprising, these forces could strike at only what they could see. Therefore, besides conventional military actions, an extensive political campaign was required to address the peasants' real interests and concerns.

Since 'peasants' power', (specifically, their motivation) was quite diverse and fragmented, some counterrevolutionary parties were able to foment and dominate peasant uprisings and even organised anti-Soviet educational programmes. Tukhachevsky maintained that, if the struggle against these insurrections was conducted ineptly and unsuccessfully, these propaganda activities could increase dangerously and threaten Soviet authority and power. Therefore, he recommended that all military actions should be accompanied by a campaign of political and economic measures coupled with clear explanations as to why these measures were used.⁸⁷

Tukhachevsky argued that such measures, if well thought out, could cut the ground from under the feet of bandit groups such as the Basmachi. He believed it was necessary to implement a correct national policy, essentially economic in nature, which emphasised the unity of political and economic interests of the working class and peasantry. Ultimately, this played a critical role in eradicating the evil Basmachi phenomenon. At the same time, Tukhachevsky also recommended Soviet authorities pay considerable attention to the local population's religious composition and sentiments.⁸⁸

Thus, in his view, the military struggle against partisans had to be adapted to local conditions, and it was necessary to establish representative bodies to unite military and civilian power. Moreover, because of the nature of national banditry, much of the work had to be carried out strictly within the national framework of the Soviet administration. Hence, he argued, militia units employed in anti-partisan actions had to be composed of local nationals.⁸⁹

Tukhachevsky realised that bandit-partisan movements were not necessarily crushed when individual bands suffered great losses or were even destroyed. Unless underlying conditions were addressed, they would inevitably revive. Therefore, he paid great attention to attracting broad segments of the local population into the creation of local village resistance forces to curtail the expansion of partisan forces and block the spread of their operations. Based on the extent to which an area had been pacified and to which pro-Soviet elements had penetrated the countryside, he recommended arming the local populace to resist

enemy formations. It was also necessary to accord these pro-Soviet elements responsibility for intelligence collection and for warning the populace and Soviet authorities about the activities of anti-Soviet bands. These measures, in turn, would help create an implacable opposition to banditry in the countryside.⁹⁰

To fight banditry successfully, Tukhachevsky advised, on the one hand, the practice of large-scale repression, and, on the other hand, the employment of enticing incentives. He considered the most effective repressive methods to be the eviction from their lands and homes of the families of bandits who provided safe haven for their partisan offspring, and confiscation and subsequent distribution of their property among the pro-Soviet population. If immediate eviction was impossible, he advocated the establishment of large scale concentration camps. All repression and incentives had to be well planned in accordance with available resources and the overall political and military plan of action. This was based on the presumption that idle threats only undermined the administration's authority and generated mistrust among the local populace. Thus, before the start of any campaign to eliminate banditry, considerable thoughtful organisational work was essential to co-ordinate the measures planned by administrative and military authorities. It made sense to begin decisive military operations only when everything was ready. Until that point, any action by troops taking part in anti-banditry actions would exhaust them and likely be futile.⁹¹

On the other hand, Tukhachevsky recommended Soviet authorities accord special privileged treatment to those who surrendered their arms voluntarily. As the struggle against banditry succeeded, he argued, the number of those who voluntarily surrendered would inevitably increase, thus greatly facilitating the overall task of eradicating anti-government gangs.

Tukhachevsky believed the regular army should focus on two principal missions while fighting against insurgents. First, it should perform the tasks of a garrison-based occupation army to safeguard the existence and work of appropriate administrative organs. Second, it should serve as a raiding force against active partisan bands. In addition to occupation forces, military authorities should establish a reinforced militia in occupied localities. At the same time, military intelligence organisations should determine the scope and composition of bandit-partisan formations, identify family members supporting the banditry, and ascertain the insurgent bands' territorial origins and roots. Once these conditions had been met, Tukhachevsky believed the gangs could be exterminated

in combat on the battlefield or could be separated from their territorial districts by active counter-partisan operations.⁹²

CONCLUSIONS

All of this makes it abundantly clear that, before Hitler's aggression against the Soviet Union in the summer of 1941, the partisan (guerrilla) spirit of the '*partisanshchina*' was deeply ingrained in the soul of many people who inhabited regions of the Soviet Union which were to be occupied by the Germans. Some high-ranking officials made a distinct effort to see to it that partisan (guerrilla) warfare theory conformed to the peculiarities of the Russian environment. These efforts, combined with the rich experience acquired during and after the Russian Civil War not only by many partisan fighters but also by numerous political leaders, were of paramount importance in kindling large scale partisan warfare in 1941-44. The Party and state leadership of the Soviet Union would not squander their opportunity to field thousands of partisan fighters and their supporters behind the German front lines. As a result, those who led, fought in, and supported partisan war would contribute significantly to the ultimate defeat of the Nazi war machine.

NOTES

1. A. Kaplan, 'Partizanskaia voina v okkupirovannikh raionakh kitaia' [Partisan war in occupied regions of China], in *Kommunisticheskii international* (Moscow: Pravda, 1940), No. 6, p. 61.
2. Laqueur, *Guerrilla*, pp. 141, 147.
3. L. Fischer, *The Life of Lenin* (New York/London: Harper & Brown, 1964), p. 150; J. Erickson, 'Lenin as Civil War Leader', in L. Schapiro and P. Reddaway, eds, *Lenin: The Man, the Theorist, the Leader* (New York: Praeger, 1967), p. 159.
4. K. Marx and F. Engels, *Sochineniia* [Collected works], *izdanie 2-3*. [2nd, 3rd eds], tom 6 (Moscow: *Politicheskaiia literatura*, 1957), p. 416. Hereafter cited as *Sochineniia* with appropriate volume.
5. K. Marx in *Neu Rheinische Zeitung*, No. 161, April 1849, as quoted in K. Drum, *Air Power and Russian Partisan Warfare* (New York: Arno Press, 1968), p. 1 (Editor's note).
6. Marx and Engels, *Sochineniia*, tom 2 (Moscow, 1955), p. 517.
7. *The New Encyclopedia Britannica*, Vol. 8 (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1991), p. 346.

8. Marx and Engels, *Sochineniia*, tom 15 (Moscow, 1959), p. 355.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 345.
10. Marx and Engels, *Sochineniia*, tom 10 (Moscow, 1958), p. 455.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 441.
12. Marx and Engels, *Sochineniia*, tom 12 (Moscow, 1958), p. 118.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 389.
14. Marx and Engels, *Sochineniia*, tom 13 (Moscow, 1959), p. 580.
15. *Sovetskii entsiklopedicheskii slovar'* [Soviet encyclopaedic dictionary] (Moscow: Sovetskaia entsiklopediia, 1986), p. 1433. Hereafter cited as *SES*.
16. Marx and Engels, *Sochineniia*, tom 17 (Moscow, 1960), pp. 170–1.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 202–3.
18. Marx and Engels, *Sochineniia*, tom 14 (Moscow, 1959), p. 104.
19. Marx and Engels, *Sochineniia*, tom 12, p. 118.
20. Marx and Engels, *Sochineniia*, tom 13 (Moscow, 1959), p. 379.
21. Marx and Engels, *Sochineniia*, tom 12, p. 119.
22. Marx and Engels, *Sochineniia*, tom 13, p. 379.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 380.
24. Marx and Engels, *Sochineniia*, tom 17, pp. 168–9.
25. Marx and Engels, *Sochineniia*, tom 15, p. 355.
26. Ia. Pavlov, *Na prochnom fundamente Marksizma–Leninizma* [In search of the basis of the fundamentals of Marxism–Leninism] (Minsk: Znanie, 1980), p. 18.
27. Osanka, *Modern Guerrilla Warfare*, pp. 66–7.
28. V. Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* [Complete collection of works], 5-e izdanie [5th edn], tom 14 (Moscow: Politizdat, 1960), p. 4. Hereafter cited as *PSS* with appropriate volume.
29. Lenin, *PSS*, tom 5 (Moscow, 1967), p. 7.
30. Lenin, *PSS*, tom 12 (Moscow, 1960), pp. 180–1.
31. Abbreviated as 'Cadets', these were members of the Constitutional Democratic Party, the leading party of the liberal bourgeois monarchists in Russia. The party was founded in 1905.
32. Lenin, *PSS*, tom 13 (Moscow, 1979), pp. 376–7.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 370.
34. 'Novye dokumenty Vladimira I'lycha Lenina', [New documents of Vladimir I'lych Lenin] *Kommunist*, No. 5 (May 1970), p. 11.
35. *Proletarii*, No. 2 (February 1905), p. 9.
36. Lenin, *PSS*, tom 12 (Moscow, 1960), p. 181.
37. *Ibid.*
38. Lenin, *PSS*, tom 11, p. 337.
39. Lenin, *PSS*, tom 13 (Moscow, 1979), p. 365.
40. Lenin, *PSS*, tom 12, p. 228.
41. Lenin, *PSS*, tom 14 (Moscow, 1960), p. 4.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
43. *Ibid.*, pp. 6–7,
44. Lenin, *PSS*, tom 11 (Moscow, 1960), p. 181.

45. Lenin, *PSS*, tom 12, p. 229; tom 14, pp. 7–8.
46. Lenin, *PSS*, tom 10 (Moscow, 1960), pp. 112–13.
47. Lenin, *PSS*, tom 13, pp. 322–3.
48. Lenin, *PSS*, tom 11, p. 349.
49. Lenin, *PSS*, tom 14, p. 8.
50. Pavlov, *Na prochnom*, p. 39.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 29.
52. Laqueur, *Guerrilla*, p. 171.
53. *VIZh*, No. 3 (8) (March 1940), p. 68.
54. J. Armstrong, ed., *Soviet Partisans in World War II* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964), pp. 10–11.
55. *Istoriia grazhdanskoi voiny*, tom. 4, p. 312.
56. G. Stewart, *The White Armies of Russia* (New York: Macmillan, 1933), p. 141.
57. Lenin, *PSS*, tom 38 (Moscow, 1981), p. 286.
58. The Bullitt Mission to Russia, *The Testimony Before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, of William C. Bullitt* (New York: B. W. Huebsch, 1919), p. 15.
59. L. Shaumian, *Kamo* (Moscow, 1959), p. 233.
60. Lenin, *PSS*, tom 50 (Moscow, 1982), p. 45.
61. Lenin, *PSS*, tom 35 (Moscow, 1962), p. 580.
62. J. Erickson, 'Lenin as Civil War Leader', in L. Schapiro and P. Reddaway, eds, *Lenin, the Man, the Theorist, the Leader* (New York: Praeger, 1967), p. 174.
63. The Social Revolutionaries (SRs) and the Constitutional Democrats were the major opposition parties to the Bolsheviks. The Social Revolutionaries were members of a petty-bourgeois party of that name in Russia, which was formed at the end of 1901 and beginning of 1902 as a result of the amalgamation of various *Narodniki* [populist] groups and circles. The 'Cadets' (CDs) were members of the Constitutional Democratic Party, the leading party of liberal bourgeois monarchists in Russia. The Cadet Party was founded in 1905. See *SES*, p. 520.
64. Lenin, *PSS*, tom 36 (Moscow, 1981), p. 515.
65. E. Wollenberg, *The Red Army*, trans. C.W. Sykes (London: Secker & Warburg, 1938), p. 38.
66. W. Laqueur, *Stalin: The Glasnost Revelations* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1990), p. 328.
67. Iu. Korablev, *V.I. Lenin i zashchita zavoevanii Velikogo Oktiabria* [V. I. Lenin and the defence of the achievement of the Great October] (Moscow: 'Nauka', 1979), pp. 210–11.
68. *Kommunist*, 7 March 1918.
69. *Pravda*, 6 March 1918.
70. *Kommunist*, 14 March 1918.
71. *Piatii vserossiiskii s'ezd sovetov. stenograficheskii otchet* [The 5th Congress of Soviets, stenographic notes] (Moscow: VtzhIK, 1918), pp. 77, 88.

72. *Vosmoi s'ezd RCP (b): mart 1919, protokoly* [The 8th Congress of the RCP(b) – Russian Communist Party – Bolshevik: March 1919, protocols] (Moscow: Politizdat, 1959), pp. 146, 147.
73. Lenin, *PSS*, tom 39 (Moscow, 1981), pp. 152, 153.
74. Laqueur, *Guerrilla*, p. 171.
75. J. Reed, *Ten Days That Shook the World* (Moscow: Prosveschenie, 1981), p. 23.
76. A 'pood' is a Russian weight measurement equal to 16 kilograms or 35.2 pounds.
77. The Bullitt Mission to Russia, *Testimony*, pp. 63–4.
78. From a television broadcast in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), 1st channel, 26 April 1992.
79. M. Frunze, *Izbrannye proizvedeniia* [Selected works] (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1965), p. 53.
80. *SVE*, tom 8 (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1980), p. 151.
81. Laqueur, *Stalin: The Glasnost Revelations*, p. 353.
82. O. Suvenirov, 'Vsearmeiskaia tragediia' [An all-army tragedy], *VIZh*, No. 3 (March 1989), p. 42.
83. M. Gorbachev, *Oktiarbr' i perestroika: Revolutsiia prodolzhaetsia* [October and perestroika: The revolution continues] (Moscow: Politizdat, 1987), p. 21.
84. Laqueur, *Guerrilla*, p. 165.
85. M. Tukhachevsky, *Izbrannye proizvedeniia* [Selected works]. *v 2-kh tomakh* [in two volumes], tom. 2 (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1964), pp. 260, 261.
86. The 'Kulaks' were rich or landed peasants.
87. *Voina i revolutsiia*, [War and revolution], No. 9 (September 1926), p. 12.
88. *Ibid.*, pp. 14, 15.
89. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
90. *Ibid.*
91. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
92. *Ibid.*, pp. 15, 16.

2

The Beginning of the Partisan Movement

On 22 June 1941, Germany launched an all-out attack on the Soviet Union. It committed that act by surprise and despite the existence of the Soviet–German Non-Aggression Pact that had been negotiated less than two years before. The Nazi High Command counted on routing the Red Army’s main forces within a short period, destroying or capturing the Soviet Union’s major industrial centres, and winning the war before winter arrived. The main objective specified in the directive for Operation ‘Barbarossa’ was ‘to crush Soviet Russia in a quick campaign before the end of the war against England’.¹

When analysing the events of the Second World War, it would be correct to conclude that the Soviet Union was genuinely preparing for it. Understanding Hitler’s ultimate intent and aware of his hatred for the Soviet Union, the Soviet political and military leadership had taken steps to strengthen the country’s defensive capacity and had warned the population of the necessity of preparing for defence. Under the guise of the pre-war Five-Year Plans, the Soviet Union had been building a powerful industrial and technical basis for the country’s defence. The government had also focused its energies on strengthening the Red Army, Navy, and Air Force. It had completely reorganised the Red Army, significantly reinforced its weaponry and equipment, and attempted to improve its combat training.

However, despite all of these strenuous measures, the Germans achieved tactical surprise, smashed much of the Red Air Force on the ground, and crashed completely through Soviet defensive lines.² The only exception occurred on the southern flank, where the Soviet Chief of Naval Operations alerted the Soviet Black Sea Fleet about the possible Nazi attack.³ With good reason, the American scholar of Russian history, Riasanovsky, compared the catastrophic Red Army

defeats during the first weeks of Nazi aggression with the terrible French losses a year before.⁴

It is true that, from the first days of the struggle against the Nazis, many Red Army soldiers and units displayed exemplary bravery and resourcefulness. A vivid instance of this patriotic valour displayed by Soviet soldiers during the harrowing early days of war was the stubborn defence of the Brest fortress. There, the Germans surrounded the small garrison led by Captain I. Zubachev, Regimental Commissar Ia. Fomin, and Major P. Gavrilov in the old citadel of the fortress. For more than 20 days, the garrison courageously repelled furious attacks by an enemy many times superior to it in strength and weaponry. Weeks later, when German forces were nearing Smolensk, combat still raged on the bank of the Western Bug River, far to their rear.⁵

History has recorded numerous similar examples of heroic resistance by individual Red Army units during the grim initial period of the Soviet–German conflict, when many Soviet soldiers distinguished themselves by individual acts of bravery. For example, the exploits of squadron leader Nikolai Gastello became a symbol of this heroism. On 26 June 1941, he flew his blazing bomber into a column of enemy tanks and tank cars near Minsk. The terrible explosion and ensuing fire destroyed several tanks and their crews.⁶ However, in June 1941 individual bravery was not enough. German occupation of a large portion of Soviet territory with its associated major industrial centres, the destruction or capture of a large number of Soviet aircraft, tanks, guns, other weaponry, and munitions depots placed the Soviet Union at a tremendous disadvantage in the early months of the war.

At the same time, staggering personnel and equipment losses, to which the German Army was unaccustomed, accompanied Hitler's early successes. By the end of August, through combat or sheer 'wear and tear', the Nazi army had already lost of 40 per cent of its tanks, 22 per cent of its trucks, and 30 per cent of its artillery prime movers.⁷ In a diary entry of 30 November 1941, Franz Halder, chief of the German Army General Staff, noted, 'The total losses of the Eastern armies (not counting the sick) are 743,112 officers and men – 23 per cent of the entire force of 3.2 million'.⁸ This stark confession speaks for itself. The primary reasons for such losses were not just the great distances, the poor roads, and, as claimed by many, the severe climatic conditions the Germans encountered during October and November 1941, as they carried out their final lunge toward Moscow. Although these factors did play a certain role, so did the courage and steadfastness of Soviet soldiers as

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they found within themselves the fortitude to recover from the earlier debilitating setbacks. Nor did the majority of the population of the German-occupied territories give up in the face of the Red Army's major defeats in the summer and autumn of 1941. The inexorable growth of a powerful partisan movement in these regions indisputably proved this.

THE PARTISAN SITUATION IN SUMMER 1941

In the summer of 1941, for two main reasons, partisan fighting in the occupied Soviet territories remained only rudimentary at best and did not involve mass participation by the local populace. In the first place, in most instances, Soviet authorities had not undertaken prudent advanced preparations for this kind of war, such as the organisation of nuclei for future partisan detachments, and the storage and stockpiling of weaponry and foodstuffs for partisans had not been accomplished. This was so primarily because pre-war Soviet military doctrine was essentially offensive in nature, and, as a result, it refused to acknowledge the possibility that an enemy force would occupy Soviet territory. However, just as most rules have exceptions, there were also exceptions to this rule. Walter Jacobs noted just one, writing:

It appears that, by the time of the German invasion, the Soviet government had prepared certain official groups, for instance, the Red Army, the NKVD (Soviet Secret Police), and Party leaders, to operate as leaders and organisers of irregular resistance against enemy troops. Examples of early resistance attest to such preparations.⁹

Secondly, in most cases, the precipitous German advance physically eliminated the possibilities to prepare for the conduct of partisan war. At the same time, however, in those regions where the German advance was slower, there were some cases where partisan activities were prepared in advance. For example, in his memoirs, Fedorov, a famous Soviet partisan leader twice was awarded with the title of Hero of the Soviet Union (the highest available decoration), stated that, as early as 4 July 1941, *soviets* [councils] and other Party organisations received instructions to effect all possible preparations for partisan warfare. Acting on these instructions, authorities in the Chernigov region in the Ukraine made significant preparations for future partisan activity. They stockpiled weaponry and foodstuffs, selected partisan unit commanders based

primarily on their Russian Civil War experiences, and organised special meetings and seminars for the command personnel of future partisan detachments and underground Party cells. According to Fedorov, these concrete measures helped prepare for organised resistance when the Germans later occupied the Chernigov region.¹⁰

Likewise, considerable preparations for partisan warfare took place in many regions of the Russian Republic that the Germans occupied in late summer or early autumn 1941. For example, based primarily on German reports, Gerhard Weinberg has described the steps taken at that time by Soviet authorities in the El'nia-Dorogobuzh area of Smolensk district. He wrote:

Preparation for the formation of partisan units had been made by the Soviet High Command before the German forces reached the area, and the first efforts to activate partisan groups were made in August and September 1941, at a time when the front ran temporarily through the western-most part of the area. These efforts were confined largely to bringing in groups of men through the front and by air to organize many small partisan groups which might later be of service to the Red Army.¹¹

In some cases, preparation in advance for partisan operations permitted the training of a certain number of command and staff personnel, the organisation of communications networks and secret address systems, and the preparation of hiding places for weapons and political literature. In Belorussia, Soviet authorities left behind 1,200 Party members to conduct underground activity.¹² In the Voroshilovgrad region of the Ukraine, authorities prepared a total of 120 hiding-places for partisan and underground use.¹³ In most cases, however, partisan units and underground Party organisations were not formed beforehand in the Ukraine, Belorussia, and the Baltic republics. Moreover, when they were finally activated, they had difficulty acting in unified fashion and effectively operating, owing primarily to the occupation authorities' harsh and efficient repression.

OFFICIAL ATTEMPTS TO FOSTER PARTISAN WAR

The first official Party and governmental directives calling for popular resistance by all possible means played a very important role in kindling the flames of partisan warfare in occupied regions. Demands that the

whole country should be prepared for a protracted struggle with a very dangerous enemy emerged only after the Communist leadership had realistically evaluated the disastrous initial course of the war. On 30 June 1941, Stalin activated the State Defence Committee (GKO) under his own control to co-ordinate military and civilian governmental leadership functions. Stalin vested all military authority in the 'Stavka', or Headquarters of the Supreme Command, which he also headed.¹⁴

The most effective means by which to summon mass participation in decisive armed struggle was through official addresses. This was done successfully. Since it anticipated that the struggle would be primarily military in nature, the Party and government wanted the masses in both occupied and non-occupied territories to be placed on a full war footing. The central focus in the lives of the majority of the Soviet people became how to fight and cope with the enemy. In retrospect, despite the situation on the Soviet-German front and despite the difficulties the Soviet people had to endure, the final declared goal remained the total defeat of Nazism and the re-establishment of justice wherever it had been trampled on.

The first extraordinary Party and State proclamations issued in the wake of the German invasion spoke of the unprecedented danger facing the country. These proclamations also emphasised that the war being waged by the Soviet people was also a war to assist all the world's nations; an indivisible part of a unified, world-wide front defending freedom and resisting popular enslavement. The eloquent and nearly poetic phrase, 'soldiers of freedom', was born as a result of prior experiences of struggle against a common enemy. Hence, the phrase, 'soldiers of freedom', was a natural combination of the sentiments of both patriotism and internationalism.

By the end of 1941, the scale and scope of the Second World War had greatly expanded. On 7 December 1941 without declaring war, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, the premier US naval base in the Pacific, and inflicted heavy losses on the US Navy. The United States entered the war against Japan, and later against Nazi Germany as well, a development of special importance to the Soviet Union, since the war now became a real world war. By the beginning of 1942, the anti-Fascist coalition had embraced 26 countries, whose population made up the overwhelming majority of mankind.¹⁵

The first official declaration by the Soviet government on the state of affairs in the country after Hitler's invasion was a directive prepared jointly on 29 June 1941 by the Council of People's Commissars of the

Soviet Union (CPC USSR) and the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) (henceforth abbreviated as CC AUCP(B). Stalin announced the directive in a radio broadcast on 3 July 1941.¹⁶ Although the directive formulated only general principles concerning the struggle in the enemy rear area, it is difficult to overestimate its importance. Some Western historians have named this document ‘Stalin’s Order’.¹⁷ However, it was not an order as much as an invitation to resist the invaders to a maximum by all possible means.

Here, it is necessary to focus on one controversial feature of Stalin’s address that today is often debated by authors and television figures in the various republics of the Commonwealth of Independent States. This feature is Stalin’s comment that the Nazis attacked ‘suddenly and treacherously’. While the latter term (‘treacherously’) is appropriate, reservations must be applied to the former (‘suddenly’). Use of the term ‘sudden’ was clearly not honest. The fact is that, on several occasions, both Soviet and British intelligence warned Stalin about the impending German invasion, in one instance, even including the precise date of the attack – June 1941. In his secret speech to the delegates of the 20th Party Congress in 1956, none other than future Party Secretary Nikita Khrushchev correctly accused Stalin of ‘blindness’.¹⁸

The historian Geoffrey Hosking is also correct in asserting that the lack of Red Army preparedness illustrated a characteristic defect of the Communist totalitarian system. On the one hand, it was very poor at assimilating and evaluating information coming from the Americans and British intelligence and their own intelligence service, particularly information that was unpleasant to Stalin.

On the other hand, the country’s population was not permitted to hear for themselves and to judge the truthful information.¹⁹ Victor Kravchenko, a former official of the Ferrous Metals Commissariat later recalled:

I was in daily official touch with commissariats responsible for factories and stockpiles and workers in the area under attack. It soon became apparent to us that no one in the Kremlin had bothered, in the twenty-two months of grace (from the Nazi–Soviet Pact to the outbreak of war), to formulate a programme for the evacuation of people and property. The initiative, of course, could only have come from the top. For anyone else to raise the question would have opened him to charges of ‘defeatism’ and

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‘demoralizing rumours’ . . . Faced with a defensive war of immense weight, we were helpless. We had to improvise everything from scratch – evacuation, mobilization, and guerrilla resistance in the enemy’s rear.²⁰

Stalin’s radio address did contain some remarks on partisan warfare. In that regard, he stated:

Partisan units, mounted and on foot, must be formed in the area occupied by the enemy; diversionary groups must be activated to combat enemy forces, to foment partisan warfare everywhere, to blow up bridges and roads, to damage telephone and telegraph lines, and to set fire to forests, stores, and transport. Conditions in the occupied regions must be made unbearable for the enemy and all of his accomplices. They must be hounded and annihilated at every step, and all their measures must be frustrated.²¹

Thus, this joint directive set forth the general parameters of a broad programme for partisans in areas occupied by the Germans. It specified destruction of all property useful to the Germans, formation of spy and propaganda networks, organisation of partisan detachments, establishment of concealed bases to sustain partisan activity, and designation of assembly points for straggling soldiers and prisoners of war who had escaped from Nazi POW and concentration camps. Some historians argue that the Directive’s content demonstrated the Red Army’s inability to resist the Nazis effectively or to hold the hinterland.²² Hitler himself conditioned this view by calling the directive a ‘a cry of despair’.²³ In actuality, however, the directive did play a genuinely important role, and, subsequently, it provided the basis for numerous documents issued by republic and district partisan headquarters.

Of course, the principal body associated with kindling partisan warfare in 1941 was the Communist Party. Its Central Committee directed the formation of partisan forces parallel to the Party’s existing territorial structure. CC AUCP(B) directive entitled ‘Concerning the Organisation of the Struggle in the Rear Areas of German Forces’, dated 18 July 1941, specified partisan-warfare missions and tasks to be performed by the Party’s elaborate organisational network from the highest Party echelon to underground Party cells in the enemy rear. It specified how to implement this form of warfare.²⁴

Because of their nationalistic and anti-Soviet sentiments, many people in the occupied territories greeted the Nazis as liberators from the Soviet

command system. Many others, however, were prepared to resist and fight against the invaders. Kalinin, the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, correctly noted that the local populace wanted to fight, but they hesitated and did not know what form of struggle to choose.²⁵ Therefore, in the people's eyes, the initial directives regarding partisan warfare literally were instructions to unleash guerrilla fighting in all parts of the enemy rear and to try to create unbearable conditions for the Nazis. An extensive effort ensued through the Central Committee of the Communist Party, the NKVD, and the Army political departments involving the use of every available means and channel to organise the greatest number of partisan formations as was possible. Admittedly, however, no effective chain of command existed at this stage of the struggle.

The CC AUCP(B) ordered Republican Central Committees, and regional and district committees, whose territories the Germans occupied, to direct partisan operations and units. It concentrated its attention on generating a mass movement and on the predominantly combat nature of the anticipated struggle. It also dispatched many Party and Komsomol' members and other administrative personnel, beyond the front line, into the enemy rear, to assist republican leaders in performing these tasks.

Many republican and district Party committees, departments and sections of the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD), and Military Councils and headquarters of *fronts* (army groups) and armies received even more specific instructions concerning how to conduct guerrilla operations. Subsequently, some republics activated special operational groups whose mission was to assist in the organisation and control of the partisan activity. For example, during August and September 1941, the Red Army's Main Political Directorate and *front* and army political directorates organised special departments (sections at army level). These special departments were responsible not only for controlling partisan activities but also for Communist indoctrination of the local population and Red Army personnel who had been caught up in large-scale German encirclements and who had remained in the enemy rear. Party organs required the latter to continue resisting the enemy.²⁶ In these circumstances, many of the first partisan detachments and groups consisted predominantly of Party members, and, as such, higher administrative echelons considered these formations as the most reliable. In addition, Party organs used these partisan formations as the basis upon which to activate other partisan units.²⁷

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The earliest partisan formations acted without benefit of any formal regulations and manuals on partisan guerrilla warfare. Specific documents on partisan warfare, such as the *Partisan Guidebook*, the *Handbook for Partisans*, the *Handbook for Agents*, and instructions for commanders contained in the *Field Service Regulations of the Red Army* (Chapter 17) were available for use considerably later, beginning in 1942.²⁸

PARTISAN ORGANISATION AND ACTIVITIES TO SPRING 1942

Although Soviet partisan warfare lacked a mass nature at the time, its initial effects became apparent to the Germans as early as the summer and autumn of 1941. Military studies prepared by former Wehrmacht officers in the post-war years for US Army use indicate that Soviet partisans operated actively from the earliest days of the German invasion.²⁹ Moreover, the numerical strength of partisan forces in the occupied territories was already impressive by the end of 1941. While official Soviet sources state that about 2,000 partisan units of different strength totalling approximately 90,000 men were operating by this time, some Western historians dispute this figure.³⁰ For example, Alexander Werth assessed partisan strength by the winter of 1941–42 at only about 10,000 fighters.³¹

At this stage of the war, Red partisans were most active in the southern region of Leningrad District, in the Kalinin, Smolensk, and Orel Districts, in the western part of Moscow District, and in the Vitebsk, Minsk, Mogilev, Sumy, Chernigov, Khar'kov, and Stalino (Donetsk) Districts.³² As was the case in the first phase of the war, as Soviet forces retreated, the missions of partisan units in the close and deep enemy rear were to slow down the German advance in all regions and by all means. Suffice it to say, there was little the partisans could do in support of the retreating Red Army except to sabotage the enemy communication network.³³ All other partisan activities were of a more general nature, such as destroying army supply depots in the enemy rear, sabotaging pump-houses, and hiding collective farm equipment in the forests. Although these actions were much better than nothing, only in the longer run could partisan forces offer real assistance to Soviet forces fighting against Nazi Germany and its satellites.

During the war's initial stage, partisan organisation and weaponry differed considerably from one formation to the next. Some formations were loose organisations consisting of differing numbers of groups, while

others had more strict chains of command including companies and platoons. Partisan detachments, battalions, regiments, and brigades also existed. Still other partisan formations activated in front-line regions before the German occupation structurally resembled true military organisations. These usually consisted of companies, platoons, and squads and also possessed signal, reconnaissance, and supply elements. The average strength of partisan units usually did not exceed 50–75 men. Their staffs consisted of a commander, a political commissar, and a chief of staff.

The exercise of command and control functions within partisan units was very strict indeed. Normally, any infraction invariably entailed brutal punishment. As a rule, anyone who was seriously suspected of treason was summarily eliminated. For example, in an interview the chief of staff of the '*Burevestnik*' [Seabird] Belorussian Partisan Brigade, Lovetsky, said that the members of his brigade's staff maintained close control over all rank-and-file guerrillas in their detachment and assured constant secrecy. Regarding partisan tactics, he indicated that the guerrillas usually avoided large-scale combat actions. On the other hand, when numerically inferior German forces came too close to their positions, the partisans ambushed them. However, in the event that partisans faced superior forces, which was more characteristic for the 1942–44 period, they attempted to fight a delaying action so that the bulk of the partisan formation would have an opportunity to escape. Typical characteristics of partisan operations included extensive use of ruses and deception, skilful camouflage, high mobility, and maximum exploitation of all terrain features.

Some of these initial partisan formations were aggressive and inflicted substantial losses on the German Army. For example, in combat near the Ukrainian capital of Kiev in autumn 1941, the 1st Kiev Partisan Regiment was rather active. During the period from 3 September to 15 October 1941, the Voroshilov Partisan Detachment, commanded by Kutsenko, engaged 50 times in different sorts of combat operations in Kirovograd District.³⁴ Finally, during the latter half of September 1941, the partisans in Chernigov region succeeded in destroying 11 bridges, 19 enemy tanks, six armoured vehicles, several artillery pieces, and two ammunition depots.³⁵

Of course, these achievements were only the first meagre steps along the thorny path of creating a more powerful partisan movement in the enemy rear. When he heard the first reports about Soviet partisans, Hitler expressed a certain satisfaction and even welcomed them,

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declaring, 'It has its advantages. It gives us a chance to exterminate whoever turns against us.'³⁶ But, with passage of time, the partisan blows became ever heavier and more worrisome, and, judging by the German command's reports, these blows became more than mere pinpricks, even during the initial stage of the war. In fact, a special German Armed Forces High Command (OKW) order, dated 16 September 1941, stated that, in some sectors, the menace posed by the Moscow-controlled 'Communist partisan bands' was considerable.³⁷

Many German orders issued in the autumn of 1941 contain warnings about partisan activities and, often, instructions on how to fight the partisan menace in occupied territories. A prime example is an order by the commandant of the German Fourth Army rear area to the army's 137th Infantry Division, dated 18 October 1941. This order required that, in the event of partisan activity, two local inhabitants would be shot for every German serviceman killed by partisans, and three inhabitants would be executed if partisans attacked an important German installation. In addition, peasants found wandering about in the streets after dark or found near railway or highway bridges at any time were to be shot on sight.³⁸ Army Group Centre's Order No. 607/41, dated 17 November 1941, contained almost identical instructions to its 12th Infantry Division.³⁹

PROPAGANDA AND COUNTER-PROPAGANDA

The Soviet government also paid considerable attention to its political influence over the population in the occupied territories and to army personnel who were obliged to continue the struggle behind the front line. It recognised that powerful mass resistance against the occupation regime combined with high popular morale was necessary to win the war. This made it imperative that they counter German Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels' effective propaganda machine, which published 260 local newspapers in the occupied Soviet territories.⁴⁰

Counter-propaganda was a very important function throughout the entire period of Nazi occupation and was essential for the existence and ultimate success of the Soviet Partisan Movement. This was so because the Germans redoubled their efforts in 1942 to use psychological-warfare operations to lower morale within partisan units and increase partisan desertion. Having concluded that they had made mistakes in 1941 that contributed to the growth of partisan formations, from spring

1942 the Germans began to distinguish more carefully between partisan deserters and other prisoners. Rather than killing both, they now promised decent treatment to the former. The Germans began using all possible media means, including leaflets, posters, and letters from deserters to convince the local inhabitants and partisan fighters that they would not hold their participation in guerrilla bands against them. The Nazi propaganda machine also tried to approach former Red Army servicemen with promises of good treatment, jobs, and land for those who deserted the ranks. There is considerable evidence to indicate that, despite all the efforts made within partisan units to counter Nazi agitation, a certain number of partisans did desert. Although these deserters included representatives of all partisan movement components, evidently, local recruits constituted the largest faction.

Soviet and Russian publications studiously avoid mention of the desertion problem. As a result, it is virtually impossible to find accurate statistical evidence of the actual number who deserted during specific periods. However, Western sources have emphasised the problem, including works by Mountfield, Macksey, and Asprey, which insisted that large numbers of partisans deserted from their units but offer no concrete evidence as to how many.⁴¹ Earl Ziemke, however, perhaps came the closest to the truth in this matter. He wrote, 'Desertion was a persistent problem, although it did not reach catastrophic proportions largely because German and partisan policy and the cause of war combined to make desertion a poor alternative even for the most desperate men.'⁴²

Of course, it was the Communist Party that directed the Soviet propaganda and counter-propaganda effort, and, in doing so, it applied Lenin's dicta for political work. The essence of this effort, which was essentially political education, was to explain to the local population the dangers involved in losing the war, to expose the nature of the German 'New Order', and to reveal the final aims of the German administration. Specifically, propaganda stressed German intent to Germanise and resettle significant proportions of the local populace beyond the borders of their republics. At the same time, Soviet propaganda also stressed the advantages (as they termed it) of the Socialist system. However, this was a very difficult and complicated task during the initial stage of war because of the Red Army's major failures and the rapid German advance. All of these propaganda efforts were very important regarding the psychological state of mind of millions of indigenous people living in the occupied territories. To the Communist Party, it was of paramount

importance to have behind the German front lines a population devoted to Communism, a population which believed in Socialist ideals and could fight stoically with the enemy to preserve these ideals.

Many Western historians, including Basil Dmytryshyn, Donald Treadgold, and others, who have claimed that, during the Soviet–German War, Stalin de-emphasised the role of the Communist Party and Marxism-Leninism, are only partially correct.⁴³ Of course, to a certain extent during the war, the Party modified Communist propaganda and made it more suited to changing conditions. An appropriate example was a speech Stalin delivered in Red Square on 7 November 1941, the 24th Anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution. In it Stalin issued an appeal not to Communist dogmas but rather to Russian nationalism by resurrecting the images of medieval Russian saints. He proclaimed, ‘Let the manly images of our great ancestors – Aleksander Nevsky, Dmitrii Donskoi, Kuz’ma Minin, Dmitrii Pozharsky, Aleksandr Suvorov, and Mikhail Kutuzov – inspire you in this war!’⁴⁴ Although Treadgold quoted this part of Stalin’s speech in his excellent book, he omitted the final words of the speech, which declared, ‘Let the victorious banner of the Great Lenin dawn upon you! . . . Under Lenin’s banner – forward to victory!’⁴⁵

Treadgold distinguished three objectives characterising Stalin’s political offensive. Stalin’s first objective was to stiffen resistance of the population in the occupied territories to the Nazis. He did so by speaking about Nazi atrocities and the desperate economic situation in the occupied areas, by reminding them that the Allies were on his side, by repeatedly promising that the Red Army would return, and by portraying Soviet power in new and attractive colours. All the while, he implied that the situation would be different and, by implication, better after the war had been won. His second objective was to inspire the populace in unoccupied Soviet territory and appeal to it to resist fiercely using Allied assistance. His third and final objective was to suggest to Allied nations that he was replacing old Communist ideology with nationalism as service to the nation and its people.⁴⁶ Stalin’s objectives, as identified by Treadgold, are essentially correct as far as they go. However, there was one more important objective Treadgold did not identify. Specifically, Stalin was also addressing the governments-in-exile and peoples in other countries occupied by the Axis powers, inviting them to take an active part in the united struggle against the Fascist aggressors.

Senior Soviet Party and governmental officials sought to increase the effectiveness of partisan warfare by subordinating the local population to

Party control and discipline to as great an extent as possible. To do so, they placed political commissars in dominating positions in the leadership of partisan formations and units, alongside commanders and chiefs of staff. The commissar was responsible for the political education of the partisans. He was also responsible for formulating policy in the area of operations and for transmitting Party directives to and implementing Party policies among the partisans, Party rank and file, and the local populace.

Cooper described the vital importance of political factors throughout the entire Soviet Partisan Movement:

The guerrilla was not simply a man fighting for his country; he was a political being struggling for a powerful and pervasive cause, against his own race as well as against the enemy. Militarily, he was to assist the progress of the Red Army by creating unbearable conditions in the enemy's rear; politically he was to be the champion of the class struggle in the furtherance of the Communist millennium . . . They [the Soviet partisans] were representatives of the Soviet regime and evidence that neither it nor ideology was defeated . . .⁴⁷

In general, the entire partisan movement fulfilled its ideological tasks in positive fashion. With ample justification, US Air Force historians N. F. Parrish, L. B. Atkinson, and A. F. Simpson remarked, 'Aside from direct or indirect damage to the German war machine, the Moscow-controlled partisan movement was the sole effective means by which the Soviet government could maintain a measure of control of, and extract varying degrees of loyalty from, the Soviet populations behind the German lines.'⁴⁸ The historian J. Armstrong also highly praised Soviet partisans' efforts in this field, stating, 'The great accomplishment of the partisans in the psychological field was their major contribution in turning the population of the occupied territories against the Germans.'⁴⁹

When considering whether the efforts of the Communist Party's apparatus in the political field were productive or counterproductive, it appears that the positive effects prevailed. In reality, many people responded to and even needed inspirational political agitation, and, in most cases, Communist propaganda was both timely and effective. It is also necessary to bear in mind the fact that most of the population in the occupied Soviet territories was peasant in nature and lived in strictly rural conditions. Before the war of aggression began, the Soviet Union's population was two-thirds rural, and the population of Belorussia, the area of major partisan-force concentration, was nearly four-

fifths rural. Thus, the peasant became the dominant object of Soviet propaganda efforts.

As a result, in most cases, the bulk of the population supported the initial partisan detachments, provided assistance to Red Army sub-units or scattered Red Army soldiers, and even assisted political workers, if not through conviction, then simply out of pity. Most soldiers lived for days in a constantly dazed condition produced by fatigue, hunger, and numberless sleepless days and nights. While trying to break out of German encirclements, they proceeded almost aimlessly from one locale to another, looking for someone or something that they could identify with, since their world was in a state of constant upheaval, and nothing was in its correct place any more. Caught in the firefights or air raids and having heard frightening stories about German raids, tanks, and atrocities, some of Red Army soldiers, fearing capture, even tore up or buried their personal documents. Most lost their very identity as their world came crashing down around them. In such a psychological state, even the simplest means of propaganda would and did have positive results.

One of many examples will suffice. On 15 July 1941, the Red Army's Main Political Department air dropped a printed leaflet to Red Army soldiers who were encircled in extensive areas behind the German front lines. The leaflet read, 'Each group of soldiers and each Red Army unit in the enemy rear must be considered as one that is fulfilling a combat mission', and it must 'destroy enemy communication lines, set fire to his supply depots, attack transports, and disrupt enemy communications.'⁵⁰

Among the many means the Communist party employed for indoctrination, they accorded primary importance to printed materials. Thus, they took special measures to ensure that the central Party newspaper *Pravda* [Truth] was delivered, usually by air, to the occupied territories. Within the first six months of the war, the newspaper published more than 100 articles about the military and political situation and partisan activities in the German-occupied regions. Albert Seaton has written that the Kremlin's bulletins concerning the situation at the front in 1941 were 'highly misleading'.⁵¹ In fact, many situation reports were really grossly exaggerated. Nevertheless, they were a very important means by which the Party improved the morale of the local population and encircled Red Army soldiers. For the same reason, all republican and regional Party Committees were obliged to print their own newspapers specially designed for the population of the occupied territories.⁵²

In addition, the Red Army's political departments also printed a con-

siderable amount of propagandist literature that it delivered behind the front line. On 30 July 1941, the People's Commissariat for Defence issued a special order entitled 'Concerning Newspapers for the Population of the Occupied Soviet Regions'. In accordance with this order, the political departments began to issue their own newspapers such as *Za sovetskuiu Ukrainu* [For the Soviet Ukraine], *Za sovetskuiu Belarussiiu* [For Soviet Belorussia], and others.

Beginning in August 1941, the Red Army's Main Political Directorate began publishing for the indigenous population in the enemy rear the special bulletin called *Vesti s sovetskoi rodiny* [News from Soviet Motherland] in Russian, Ukrainian, Belorussian and in other languages spoken by the local population of occupied territories. The circulation of this bulletin soon reached one million copies. At the same time, printing shops run by army political departments and some Party Committees published many leaflets for servicemen and people left in the enemy rear.⁵³ Throughout the remainder of the war, the Red Army's Political Directorate continued printing various propaganda materials, which it then distributed into the German rear area. For example, on 16 September 1942, it issued another special directive entitled 'Concerning Work Among the Population of the Occupied Regions of the USSR', which specified propaganda tasks related to the actual current situation on the Soviet–German front.

Radio broadcasting also played a significant role in indoctrinating the indigenous population of occupied territories. Special programmes were arranged for the population who remained in German-occupied regions. For instance, from the first weeks of the Nazi occupation, Soviet broadcasters transmitted special messages and programmes in Russian five times a day from a central radio station. After 10 July 1941, broadcasts were transmitted in Lithuanian, after 15 July in Latvian, and after 17 September in Estonian. In November 1941 the Soviet government relocated the Ukrainian Radio Committee to the Russian city of Saratov, east of the Volga River, and officially named the station after the famous Ukrainian poet T. Shevchenko. The new station then began broadcasting in Ukrainian from that location. To prepare radio programmes for the population of occupied Ukraine, the government attached the radio station named *Radianska Ukraina* [Radio Ukraine] to the Soviet All-Union Radio Committee.⁵⁴

A Western study, entitled *Soviet Partisans in World War II*, later assessed the nature and effectiveness of Soviet propaganda activity in the Nazi rear areas following the creation of the Central Headquarters of the

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Partisan Movement on 30 May 1942. It concluded many improvements had occurred, stating:

Evidence of more centralized control is further supplied by (a) the existence of a training school for partisan propagandists in Moscow, presumably operating under the Central Staff; (b) the available text of a broadcast containing directives to be followed in partisan propaganda; and (c) the fact that propaganda material, including the newspapers and leaflets printed in Moscow, were regularly brought in to the partisans for guidance and distribution.⁵⁵

All of these propaganda efforts, particularly newspapers, leaflet, and bulletin publication and distribution and, of course, radio broadcasting, helped the Communist Party significantly in its effort to organise partisan units. Soviet use of various media enabled them to tailor their propaganda programme to meet the specific characteristics of each occupied republic or region. *Sovets* [councils] and Communist Party structures appealed directly to different strata of the population and prompted people in differing regions to employ differing forms of struggle against the enemy.

At the beginning of the war, however, it was exceedingly difficult and complicated to deliver newspapers, leaflets, and other printed matter into the enemy rear area. There were instances when authorities forwarded propaganda matters to underground Party Committees and partisan groups or partisan formations by surface means of transport through gaps in the front line. For example, in the spring of 1942 this was done through the so-called '*Surazhskie vorota*' [the 'Surazh Gates'], a gap in the front line that existed for an extended period in Usviazi-Tarassenki sector of Vitebsk District.⁵⁶ Otherwise, printed matter was normally scattered by aircraft flying over German-occupied regions. In many cases, these air-dropped publications did not reach the local population and were seized by occupation authorities. As far as the reception of radio broadcasts and programmes was concerned, it was an extremely dangerous matter for the local population. In addition, when war broke out, the local populace possessed very few wireless sets. When the Nazi regime established control over the western part of the Soviet Union, it ordered the population to turn in their wireless sets to the authorities. Those who ignored this order, listened to the radio, and disseminated what the Germans termed as 'the news from Moscow' were severely punished by being hanged or shot.

The Communist Party also concentrated its energies on the indoctri-

nation of partisan fighters as well as the population as a whole. The entire indoctrination system worked like a well-oiled machine. The Party organisation in each partisan detachment placed all Party members in each platoon or company into a separate Party cell. In turn, as the senior Party official, the commissar of each brigade or detachment supervised the activities of Party secretaries in each company cell. Brigade and detachment commissars maintained close ties with municipal and district Party committees from which they received instructions and through which they passed information to the next higher echelon about detachment morale and plans to improve it. Quite naturally, at the beginning of the war, this organisational scheme had many flaws; however, it improved markedly with the passage of time.⁵⁷

In general, the role of the political commissar in partisan organisations was very important, and his influence was distinctly positive. While he was responsible for punishing back-sliders and ensuring discipline, more importantly, he also supervised all partisan activities to ensure they followed the guiding principles of the partisan movement. Specifically, he monitored fulfilment of all combat missions, and he conducted political education among the personnel in partisan units and the local population. The political commissar, whose actions were normally supported by partisan detachment or brigade commanders, always insisted that partisan fighters enhance their ideological and political awareness and maintain close and friendly contacts with the local population.

The staff of underground Party structures and the political commissars of partisan formations did all in their power to maintain the loyalty of partisan fighters to the Communist Party leadership and cause, and they struggled against any deviations from the course formulated by the Central Headquarters of Partisan Movement. As A. Fedorov, the secretary of the Chernigov underground Regional Committee, recollected, a period did exist when the partisans themselves elected some partisan detachment commanders at open meetings. However, this practice characterised only the period immediately following the outbreak of war, when the initial detachments were forming. In the long run, Party officials condemned this practice because it tended to weaken their control. Thus, the Chernigov Party Regional Committee required that all partisan detachments be subordinated to regional headquarters and closely co-ordinate their activities with it. This included the appointment of partisan detachment commanders.⁵⁸

Beyond a doubt, in many cases, the Germans were successful in intimidating the local population, and this certainly decreased, to a

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certain degree, the effectiveness of Communist Party propaganda activity. Nevertheless, the political efforts of Party organisations operating in the enemy rear were, in general, fairly productive. More often than not, the local population ultimately learned about the contents of Soviet newspapers and radio broadcasts. While not always received in timely fashion, the most important information from news bulletins and radio programmes was either reprinted or rewritten and then circulated among the people living in the cities and countryside. In areas where no German administrative or police organs existed, in particular in small villages, there were instances when the local population gathered together collectively at improvised meetings where Party activists and partisan detachment members read Soviet newspapers and passed other relevant news to the local inhabitants.

Later on in the war, the Party emphasised this form of popular agitation and often organised groups of professional lecturers to present special lectures and speeches. For example, in Vitebsk District alone, during the first half of 1942, these lecturers organised about 850 such meetings where they lectured local villagers.⁵⁹ In the Smolensk District, during April–May of the same year, sources claim that the Party and partisans organised up to 300 such meetings.⁶⁰

THE PARTISAN SITUATION IN 1942

Throughout 1942 political work among partisans and the population in occupied territories became more active. During this period, the Party and state announced officially that their goal was to convert random partisan fighting into an ‘all-peoples’ (mass popular) war in which a maximum number of indigenous peoples would participate. This was an entirely natural step, since, in the summer of 1942, the Soviet Union once again faced an extremely grave situation. After heavy fighting, in May 1942 German forces captured the Kerch Peninsula (in the Crimea) and prepared to launch a decisive offensive in the southern Soviet Union. The Red Army attempted to foil the German offensive by striking a blow of their own south-west of Khar’kov, but the Soviet effort ended catastrophically with heavy losses. Then, in early June and after a long siege, the Germans resumed heavy assaults on Soviet forces encircled in Sevastopol’. On 3 July 1942, the Soviet High Command ordered evacuation of the city.

The twin Soviet reverses at Khar’kov and in the Crimea permitted the

German command to achieve a considerable superiority of forces on the southern flank of the Soviet–German front. Having seized the initiative, the Nazis began their offensive, code-named Operation Blau [Blue], on 28 June 1942. German forces smashed through Soviet defences in the Kursk–Voronezh sector of the front and reached Voronezh on the Don River. After encountering stubborn Red Army resistance around Voronezh, the bulk of German forces swung southward to strike their main blow in the Stalingrad region. After fierce fighting, the Germans crossed the Don River near Kalach and swept on to the Volga River. By mid-September they had reached the outskirts of Stalingrad, where the famous battle bearing that name then began. Simultaneously, German forces launched yet another offensive through Rostov and then into the Caucasian Mountain region.

Thus, by late summer of 1942, the Nazis controlled territories in which 45 per cent of the Soviet Union's population had lived before the war and which had accounted for 33 per cent of the country's total industrial output and 47 per cent of its total agricultural area.⁶¹ These enormous German gains impelled the Soviet authorities to expand the scope of partisan warfare.

PROPAGANDA AND COUNTER-PROPAGANDA EFFORTS IN 1942

In September 1942 the newly formed Soviet Central Headquarters of the Partisan Movement created a political section to direct its propaganda efforts in occupied territories.⁶² This time it redoubled its effort to generate and appeal to the national feelings of those elements of the population who were supporting the German Army and former Red Army servicemen who were serving in the German Army. The goal was to encourage them to desert and join the Soviet partisans. An excellent example of these efforts was a leaflet targeted at enemy forces, which read as follows:

To the so-called 'Ukrainian Soldiers', 'Cossacks', and 'Policemen' from the former soldiers [captured Red Army men] of the Ukrainian company of the German 221st Division's 230th Battalion.

Comrades! Because of the existing situation, force of arms, and treacherous fraud, the German usurpers have succeeded in

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enticing a number of captured Red Army men and other Soviet citizens into their service. After making you their servants, the Germans have forced you to commit revolting actions in their interests, such as fighting your own people, murdering, plundering, exploiting your people, and destroying towns and villages in your own native country.

Comrades! Enough of this German insolence which is unparalleled in history! Let us finish it. It is time to come to our senses. It is time to wake up from the sleep of the devil. It is time to take revenge on the German conquerors. For our towns and villages and for our native country, it is time to repay them for the murder and torture of captured Red Army men and our citizens. This is the duty and sacred obligation of every fighter and citizen of the USSR. Every one of you can do it. Always, everywhere, and at any time, you can come over to us, to your own people, to the Red Army, to the Red partisans, and you yourselves can organise partisan groups.⁶³

In this intensified period of Party propaganda activity, the press remained the most important means of indoctrination. In 1942 the newspaper *Pravda* published 230 articles and essays devoted to partisan warfare themes and the political situation in German-occupied territories. The newspaper's editorial board even sent its reporters behind the front lines to collect information on partisan activities. The reporter M. Sivolobov spend virtually all of 1942 in occupied Belorussia, from where he dispatched news reports to Moscow and provided assistance to the editorial boards of local partisan newspapers. Central newspapers such as *Izvestiia* [News], *Krasnaia zvezda* [Red star], *Komsomol'skaia pravda* [Komsomol truth], and many others published literally dozens of articles on partisan activity. Even today, these newspapers remain the main daily organs of the press in the republics of the former USSR.

The problem of improving the distribution of printed matter remained acute. For example, the Central Committee of the Belorussian Communist Party twice, on 25 April and 29 August 1942, discussed the question of how to improve delivery of newspapers and leaflets into the enemy rear. Since early 1942 special aircraft, and even full aircraft squadrons (as was done in the case of the Western Front) were assigned to perform this mission. These squadrons were subordinate to the *front's* political directorates. Accordingly, from March 1942 to the end of the year, a squadron subordinate to the Western Front executed 1,184

sorties and dropped 54,491 leaflets. These leaflets constituted fully 31 per cent of all materials distributed into the enemy rear area adjacent to the front combat zone.⁶⁴ Official sources indicate aircraft delivered a total of about 50 million leaflets and booklets behind the German front lines.⁶⁵

At the same time, authorities broadened the frequency band and duration of radio broadcast to the local population in the enemy rear areas. During the period from January through September 1942, the radio station named *Sovetskaia Belarus* [Soviet Belorussia], which was located in Moscow, made 809 transmissions lasting a total of 770 hours, and the total number of transmissions by all stations in the Ukrainian language lasted 1,500 hours. In addition to providing information on the situation along the Soviet–German front, these stations broadcast information on various special topics. These included, in particular, the harshness of the German regime in Nazi-occupied territories, the accomplishments of the partisan movement, descriptions of major partisan operations in various regions in the German rear, and appeals to the local population to join guerrilla units. From time to time, transmissions also included special instructions to partisans concerning how they could destroy enemy stores, transport means, locomotives, and communication lines.

Partisan propaganda efforts also targeted those segments of the indigenous population who were collaborating with the Nazis. The fact that the collaborators were familiar with the country, people, language and partisan tactics made them valuable sources of intelligence information for the Nazis in their struggle against the guerrillas. Therefore, it was critical to deprive the enemy of such support. Propaganda materials prepared by the partisans often referred to Red Army and partisan successes. While the partisans threatened to annihilate the collaborators if they continued their destructive activities, they also assured them that they would be forgiven if they stopped collaborating. A leaflet, prepared in the Smolensk region was typical of efforts to woo collaborators to the partisan cause. It read:

During the last three months, the Germans have lost 1,250,000 soldiers and officers, more than 4,000 planes, 3,900 tanks, and over 4,000 guns on the Soviet front . . . The enemy knows well how to exploit the weakness and cowardice of some Russian comrades and to hire them for the police. Others who were unwilling to join the police were enlisted by force and under threat of persecution of their families. However, the Germans themselves despise these

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people and do not trust them . . . Rejoin us and fight along with us against the common enemy of the Russian people, the Germans. However, if you fight against us in the future as you have up to now, then a merciless judgement awaits you, if not today, then tomorrow, and if not tomorrow, then the day after tomorrow!⁶⁶

The Nazis also well understood the necessity of fighting for the support of the indigenous population in the occupied territories. According to B. Dmytryshyn, German propaganda hailed new agricultural achievement in 1941 and 1942, 'as the dawn of a new era'. The fact is that, in August 1941, the Nazis permitted peasants to enlarge their private peasant plots at the expense of the land belonging to collective farms. Then, in February 1942 they abolished all Soviet decrees and regulations applicable to collective farms.⁶⁷ However, since the changes occurred in name only, they played no significant role in the Nazis' propaganda efforts.

On the other hand, considerable proof exists attesting to the success of the Soviet propaganda campaign. While comparing Soviet and German efforts to win the support of the indigenous population in occupied Soviet territory, E. Howell concluded:

The efforts of the Wehrmacht Propaganda Division to counter this steady loss of native support were woefully inadequate and ended in failure. It was a losing effort from the start. Closely restricted by short-sighted OKW policy as to what it could and could not tell the people and opposed by well-executed Soviet counter-propaganda which cleverly exploited almost every aspect of German negativism and almost every German mistake, the Propaganda Division never had a real chance to accomplish its mission once the true German war aims were revealed.⁶⁸

THE FORMATION OF THE CENTRAL PARTISAN HEADQUARTERS

The full activation of central and regional headquarters for the partisan movement was a very important landmark in the establishment of real Party and state control over partisan formations and the local populace in the occupied territories. This was done beginning on 30 May 1942. On that date, a special directive of the State Committee for Defence formed the Central Headquarters [Staff] of the Partisan Movement (CHQPM or

TsShPD – Tsentral'nyi shtab partizanskoi dvizheniie). This command and control organ existed up to 13 January 1944, although it suffered several severe setbacks during this period. For example, Stalin suddenly and unexpectedly disbanded it in March 1943 only to reactivate it again in May of the same year.⁶⁹ All the republican partisan headquarters, except the Ukrainian headquarters and its Moldavian division, which reported directly to the Soviet High Command, were subordinated to the CHQPM.⁷⁰ The Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party exercised immediate supervision over the new partisan central headquarters. The CHQPM's principal missions were to maintain reliable communication with partisan formations, co-ordinate their activities, organize co-operation between Red Army units and guerrilla formations, generalize and propagate guerrilla warfare experience, supply guerrilla units with weapons, ammunition, medicine, and other means of logistic support, train qualified personnel for partisan units, and transport personnel into the enemy rear area.⁷¹

The CHQPM contained operational, intelligence, and security departments. The operations department planned operations, co-ordinated them by means of general instructions, issued specific orders to large partisan formations, and processed combat reports from the partisan units and partisan regional headquarters. This department also planned and directed politically and strategically important raids, evaluated the general situation behind the front lines, and prepared necessary military maps and sketches. Whenever required by specific missions, the department sent departmental personnel to regional partisan commands to assist them in their operations. The intelligence department, in close co-operation with the NKVD and the Army GRU [Main Intelligence Directorate], planned, co-ordinated, and collected intelligence information from partisan commands.

The security department, which also performed counter-espionage missions, was responsible for detecting German agents who had infiltrated into partisan organisations. Its functions were considered vital since the German intelligence network had recruited many secret agents and spies and infiltrated them into partisan formations to obtain exact information concerning the strength and armament and logistical bases of partisan forces as well as information about their contacts with the local population. Since some Nazi agents were superbly trained, this task was an immensely difficult one.

The first chief of the CHQPM was Panteleimon Ponomarenko, the First Secretary of the Belorussian Communist Party and a long-time

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Party official who had served in a variety of political officer assignments earlier in the war. Appointed a lieutenant general in 1943, Ponomarenko was a real master of organisation. He signed all central headquarter's orders, appointed and removed all important partisan officers, and served as the immediate superior of all partisan commanders. In retrospect, an evaluation of Ponomarenko's performance indicates that, because of his keen appreciation of the political dimensions of guerrilla war, he attached considerable importance to sound staff work, and he exercised extreme care in the timing and pacing of operations. His massive campaigns to undermine the Nazis' railway communications serve as an excellent example. In fact, his understanding of the concept of economy of force leads to the conclusion that Clausewitz himself had little to teach him about the essentials of partisan warfare.

It was also clear to the Soviet High Command, however, that the central and regional headquarters could not effectively direct the operations of all partisan units without establishing and employing some intermediate levels of command. Therefore, in addition to creating the Partisan Central Headquarters, the High Command also activated additional partisan headquarters, which were integral parts of the military councils of individual *fronts*. (The *front* military councils consisted of the *front* commander, his chief of staff, and the *front* commissar.⁷²) This decision permitted better co-ordination of partisan formation activities with operations by *front* forces. However, although the concept was valid in the ideal, in reality it was very difficult to put into effect. The problem was that partisan formations and activities were organised according to republican and regional organisational principles, that is, in accordance with territorial boundaries and the Party structure itself. Therefore, the operational zones of operating *fronts* did not and, in reality, could not coincide with the borders of individual republics and districts. Adding to the confusion was the fact that *front* operational zones frequently fluctuated due to rapid changes in the operational situation along the Soviet-German front. Thus, the achievement of true and thorough co-operation between regular and paramilitary forces remained only a desired goal. But this does not mean, however, that co-operation between the Red Army and partisan forces was altogether absent.

An intermediate level of command was also essential in order to co-ordinate effectively the operations of local partisan units and Red Army forces within German-occupied regions. Accordingly, Red Army armies, corps, and divisions that were operating in sectors where there

were heavy concentrations of partisans were supposed to provide command, control, and co-ordination for both forces. In this case too, however, reality permitted the Red Army to establish only a limited number of these control organs. Where established, they supervised partisan combat and reconnaissance activities in proximity to the front lines for only relatively brief periods of time.

At the same time, Soviet authorities adopted and applied the so-called ‘territorial principle’ of organisation to the entire partisan movement. Accordingly, republican and regional partisan headquarters were exclusively responsible to republican and regional Communist Party committees.⁷³ Additionally, the Soviets disbanded all groups, divisions, and sections of large army units, which had performed the task of planning and controlling partisan operations. Finally, control of the entire partisan force structure completely passed into Party hands. To co-ordinate partisan activities with Red Army operations, the responsible partisan headquarters dispatched liaison groups to appropriate army formations such as *fronts* or armies. According to partisan chief Ponomarenko, this control system for the entire partisan movement permitted ‘the elimination of contradictions’ in the control of all operations in the field.⁷⁴ Despite his optimistic claims, however, this was not always the case.

The Partisan Central Headquarters also tried to extend and improve contacts with partisan units and underground Party cells, and they significantly increased the number of training centres for partisan demolition experts, signalmen, and scouts. By July 1942 the CHQPM and other regional partisan headquarters were supervising the operations of more than 608 guerrilla detachments. Of course, in many cases, this control was rather loose, if only because just 69 of the detachments possessed radio sets.⁷⁵

At the end of August and early September 1942, Stalin summoned executive personnel from the Party underground and the commanders and commissars of large guerrilla formations operating in the Ukraine, Belorussia, and the Orel and Smolensk Districts to Moscow to attend a conference. The conference’s purpose was to improve partisan unit efficiency, formulate concrete missions for the entire guerrilla movement, and make the movement more aggressive. Prominent Party Central Committee, People’s Commissariat for Defence, and CHQPM figures also attended the conference, at which Stalin and Voroshilov played a leading role.

Conference participants devoted considerable attention to logistical

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support for partisan formations, in particular, the provision of partisan units with special demolition devices, and CHQPM representatives appropriately organised an exhibition of demolition equipment. Guerrilla detachment representatives present suggested concrete design changes in various types of mine equipment, and the Engineering Department of the People's Commissariat for Defence took these suggestions under advisement. Subsequently, Soviet implementation of these suggestions led to improvements in the series production of some new types of mines, which, in turn, contributed to an increase in partisan sabotage activity.⁷⁶

To sum up the results of the Moscow conference, on 5 September 1942, Stalin issued a special order entitled, 'Concerning the Missions of the Partisan Movement'. The order examined partisan unit activity during the first year of operations and formulated future missions. In general, it emphasised the quantitative growth of the entire movement and declared it, 'One of the decisive factors in [achieving] victory over the enemy.'⁷⁷ Further, the order mandated that the partisan movement would become an 'all-peoples' movement, and it then identified the principal forms of combat activities that guerrilla units were to perform. These included more powerful demolition attacks on enemy communication lines (first and foremost, railroad demolition), destruction of enemy equipment, depots, and fuel stores, incapacitation of enemy personnel, and improved reconnaissance to satisfy the needs of Red Army commands. The order accorded special attention to the co-ordination of combat operations by the Red Army large units with those of partisan detachments.⁷⁸

In accordance with the conference's recommendations, on 18 September 1942, the CHQPM adopted concrete measures to increase partisan activity and make it more effective. A special plan adopted by the CHQPM envisioned the dispatch of special partisan groups under the direct supervision of CHQPM representatives into the enemy rear to plan and conduct large-scale attacks against installations in the enemy rear area. At the same time, republican and regional partisan headquarters developed and implemented similar plans.

On 14 November 1942, the Party newspaper *Pravda* reiterated the main points in the order by publishing an article entitled, 'Concerning the Missions of the Partisan Movement'.⁷⁹ It declared that all Party functionaries had been assigned the mission of informing all indigenous people in the occupied territories about the fundamental principles in the new Party order.

THE UNDERGROUND STRUGGLE IN 1942

Partisan warfare in the occupied Soviet territories was closely related to the underground struggle. Party underground cells sometimes played a rather important role in the armed struggle, on the one hand, in successful field operations by partisan formations, and, on the other hand, by organising resistance in the occupied cities and towns. The primary mission of the Party underground was to frustrate the political, economic and military plans and activities of the Nazi occupation administration. In many instances the efforts of Party underground cells in urban areas, where there were no active guerrilla units or where their number was limited, assisted significantly in the common struggle against the Nazi administration.

After the initial German advance, enemy headquarters, logistical support units, supply depots for ammunition, petrol, oil and lubricants (POL), equipment, and other material were inevitably located in populated areas. As a rule, these key objectives were also located at the intersection of important railway lines, roads, and telephone and telegraph communication lines. Thus, they became the target of both Party underground and partisan units since destruction or damage of these military objectives could disrupt both German administration and Wehrmacht military operations and the achievement of overall German war aims. In addition, the occupied populated areas were the centres of German repair facilities, first for all railway transport, including railway stations and rolling stock, and the locations of support installations for rail transport such as depots, pump-houses, coaling depots and stations, and other types of repair shops. Partisan or underground sabotage of any of these important facilities was properly considered a vitally important mission.

German Army military administrative organs as well as small German security and support units were also often located in cities and towns. Most enemy personnel and equipment reinforcements moved through these populated areas as did men and equipment being evacuated from combat zones. Therefore, Party underground intelligence-gathering organs focused their attention on these movement bottlenecks to obtain invaluable reconnaissance information regarding future Wehrmacht military intentions.

Members of the Party underground were responsible for distributing all types of pro-Soviet propaganda materials in cities and towns where it was too risky for partisan guerrillas to venture. The underground alert

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network often conveyed warnings to threatened supporters of Soviet authorities and even spread among the population exaggerated tales of partisan achievements. All of these actions help to maintain some semblance of Soviet authority in urban areas most remote from partisan base areas. In comparison with the conditions that their partisan comrades operating in the forests faced, fighters in urban underground Party cells endured far greater risks. Laqueur correctly observed, 'The illegal party leadership in the cities lasted, as a rule, no longer than 6 months, whereas most leading partisan commanders survived the war.'⁸⁰

When discussing the efforts of underground fighters to undermine the work of the German rear, it would be proper to stress an additional important feature, namely, their ability at least partially to deprive the Germans of the ability to exploit fully the immense economic potential of the occupied territories. This was no mean feat, since these potentials were substantial. For example, before the war the territories occupied by the Germans in 1941 generated 33 per cent of the industrial production of the entire Soviet Union. These regions also embraced 55 per cent of railway lines, 47 per cent of the cultivated areas, and 45 per cent of the cattle raised in the Soviet Union.⁸¹ Some areas seized by the Nazis were vitally important regions for heavy industry. For example, in 1940 German-occupied territory in the Ukraine, principally the Donbas region, had produced roughly half of Soviet coal, 70 per cent of iron ore, 64.7 per cent of pig iron, 48.8 per cent of steel, 49.7 per cent of rolled metals, and 74.4 per cent of coking coal.⁸²

The Soviet government was able to transfer a considerable portion of this industrial base to safe locations in the Ural region, the Central Asiatic republics, and other unoccupied areas, while other portions of it were destroyed by the retreating Red Army. However, despite strenuous Soviet efforts to deny these valuable assets to the enemy, the Germans were able to capture, repair, or partially exploit numerous intact or damaged industrial facilities. These included industrial facilities and plants, coal mines, oil wells, railway yards, railway centres, and railway stations. Thereafter, and quite naturally, the German command did its best to exploit the industrial and agricultural potential of the seized Soviet installations. The Nazi Ministry for Eastern Territories, headed by Alfred Rosenberg, issued special directives aimed at the reconstruction of industrial and agricultural processing enterprises in Germany's 'new eastern provinces'.

The Germans also organised facilities in the occupied territories to repair unserviceable and damaged war material. This was both reason-

able and imperative given the intensity of the fighting on the Soviet–German front, the tremendous quantities of equipment consumed or damaged in combat or simply in movement across the vast spaces of Russia, and the long distances to repair facilities in Germany. A steady stream of tanks, guns, and lorries required repair from the very first months of the war. In the spring of 1942, after the Soviet counter-offensive at Moscow had ended, a German Army report, dated 30 March 1942, indicated that 16 panzer divisions operating in the East had a total of only 140 serviceable tanks. This was less than the normal tank strength of a single panzer division.⁸³ The transport of so vast a quantity of tanks and other vehicles to Germany for both light and capital repair was simply unreasonable and fruitless.

In its economic programme for the occupied territories, German authorities paid considerable attention to re-establishing the Ukrainian industrial base, particularly facilities in the Donbas and at Zaporozh'e and Dnepropetrovsk, as well as enterprises elsewhere, such as at Minsk, Riga, and Tallin. As early as 1942, Hitler ordered the re-establishment of industry in the Donbas with the goal of obtaining one million tons of coal in 1943 and not less than two million tons in 1944.⁸⁴

Ultimately, however, the Nazis failed to realise their economic plans in the occupied territories of the Soviet Union. MacKenzie and Curran have claimed that the main obstacle to efficient German exploitation of these territories was incompetent and corrupt officialdom, which, 'flooded the USSR like carpetbaggers'. They concluded:

The Nazis aimed to colonize choice areas with Germans and exploit Soviet resources, but they achieved remarkably little. Occupying some 400,000 square miles of Soviet territory with 65 million people and rich grain areas, the Germans obtained only a fraction of what they secured from France or from Nazi-Soviet trade agreements.⁸⁵

Much of this failure can be credited to partisans and underground Party organisations whose activities did much to frustrate Nazi plans for exploiting the economic potential of the occupied territories. Another author who shared this opinion wrote:

Partisan forces [Soviet], working as spies and saboteurs as well as soldiers, also struck at war production as far back as Germany itself, cutting the output of some factories ninety per cent. In desperation, the Germans moved plants back to home soil while

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the partisans virtually dominated the hundreds of miles between German sources of supply and front-line troops.⁸⁶

Soviet partisan and underground activities forced the Germans to maintain numerous military and police garrisons in cities and towns to protect important industrial enterprises and to patrol around the clock both the city's streets and open areas around the industrial facilities. For example, the Germans were forced to establish a special 'zone of inner security' within a radius of 20 kilometres around the city of Orel. The entire city was actually surrounded by a three-layered barbed wire defence that included an elaborate network of police and gendarme posts. All local inhabitants who happened to be in this zone were subject to immediate arrest.

Major German-occupied cities also often served as the operating headquarters and centres of German intelligence and counter-intelligence organs. These were an almost constant object of Soviet NKVD and military (GRU) activity as well as military counter-intelligence organisations (such as *SMERSH* – meaning, literally, 'Death to Spies!'), whose agents often successfully penetrated German spy networks.

Soviet authorities undertook characteristic measures when they organised resistance in cities and towns. The backbone of this resistance was the Party underground organisation, which maintained close contact with nearby partisan units and partisan headquarters and whose goal, in the broad sense, was to undermine the enemy militarily, economically, and politically. In general, the specific missions of underground resistance organisations in general coincided with those of partisan units. Underground groups were to destroy enemy depots and fuel stores, communications means, bridges, repair and railway equipment; disrupt enemy rail and road transport, and conduct reconnaissance. They exerted strenuous efforts to prevent the Germans from planting or harvesting agricultural crops and transporting them to Germany. True, Germans managed to obtain some agricultural products and ship them back to Germany but not nearly as much as they had planned. Accordingly, during the period from July 1941 through May 1942, the Germans obtained only 65 per cent of desired meat products from Belorussia (16,000 tons) and 40 per cent from the Baltic states and northern Russia (1,200 tons). At the same time, they extracted only 60 per cent (55,000 tons) and 40 per cent (20,000 tons) of grain and 55 per cent (1,700 tons) and 16 per cent (340 tons) of lard from the same two regions.⁸⁷

There were many reasons for the Nazi failure to exploit fully the vast productive capabilities of Soviet agricultural lands, particularly the Ukrainian ‘black soil’ region. One of the most important was extensive Soviet underground and partisan activity that frustrated their ambitious plans.

Many underground organisations consisted not only of Communist Party members but also of ordinary non-party people. On occasion, non-party members even led separate groups. For example, in the Belorussian city of Mogilev, the underground Party organisation named ‘The Committee for Assistance to the Red Army’ consisted primarily of non-party members. This organisation consisted of 12 subordinate groups. Party activists headed half, and non-party members led the remainder.⁸⁸

In some cases when Party executive organs were located far from the dispositions of partisan formations, underground combat groups reported directly to partisan detachment or brigade headquarters. Rashkevitz, the former commissar of the partisan detachment that operated in northern Latvia, recollected that their unit maintained contact with about 60 such underground groups. He claimed that co-ordination of underground activities by partisan staffs proved beneficial both for the partisans and for the underground fighters.⁸⁹

One of the most difficult problems faced by historians has been the determination of the actual strength of underground organisations. While they have made some efforts to calculate the exact number of patriots who were operating in the various groups in the German rear, even today the estimates remain only approximate. Between 1961 and 1964, about 4,500 historians, party functionaries, and representatives of different archival organisations in the Ukraine worked to quantify the actual number and strength of underground organisations and groups. The results of their research almost doubled the existing estimate of the number of underground fighters from 48,000 to over 90,000.⁹⁰

Nevertheless, it remains a very difficult task to determine the exact number of underground fighters in occupied Soviet territory. One of the principal reasons why this is so is that many Party groups, trying to maintain the secrecy of their activity to the greatest extent, simply destroyed all of their documents. Many underground groups refused to keep any reports on their organisation and sabotage work, and, since many of these groups formed after the German invasion, even central Party administrators and partisan groups did not know they existed. Many groups activated after the German invasion carried out sabotage and terrorist acts for a time but were then discovered and either partially

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or fully destroyed. In other words, many underground cells and combat groups simply vanished without a trace.

Numerous examples have come to light since the end of the war, following thorough analysis of archival materials of underground groups and even separate individuals who fought actively against the Nazis. For example, in 1942–43 in the Russian city of Orel, the German authorities executed A. Shalimov, the city's mayor, Stavitsky and Golovko, city police-officers, Iazikov, the chief of the city police's criminal investigation department, P. Miachin, the chief of the Orel regional police, and other local police force members. Post-war investigation indicated that all of these men were actually members of an Orel underground resistance group.⁹¹

CONCLUSIONS

In general, research indicates that the efforts of the Soviet political leadership to organise large scale and effect guerrilla resistance and partisan war in the German rear area were both timely and effective. These efforts helped create the nuclei of many partisan detachments and provide them with reliable and effective leadership. Soviet authorities recognised the need to focus and canalise military resistance in the occupied territories and to provide efficient political control over all forms of partisan war. They did not miss this opportunity to supervise their 'all-peoples' war.

In more general terms, the most notable contribution the Soviet experience made to general theories of partisan war was that such a popular movement requires a strong and effective military-political organisation in order to fight effectively. While most guerrilla war experts have recognised this fact, some have failed to note the positive Soviet experience. For example, while arguing for the necessity for having strong military and political organisation in guerrilla warfare, John Ellis noted the most successful guerrilla wars where this was a factor. His list mentioned the Chinese, Yugoslavian, and Vietnamese partisans, but he omitted the Soviet experience.⁹² Evidently, he harboured some reservations about the history of the Soviet partisans from 1941–44.

Thus Soviet authorities played an important role in the creation of partisan units and underground resistance organs in areas occupied by German forces. First and foremost, they did so by formulating and dis-

tributing guiding documents necessary for the conduct of partisan war. In some areas, primarily in the Ukraine and the Russian Republic, they carried out some work in advance of war to create underground Communist and Komsomol' cells and also partisan detachments, sabotage groups, and destruction battalions. These they supported with a limited network of arms, munitions, and food storage depots. Central, regional, and district Party Committees also did much to organise the evacuation from occupied regions of industrial enterprises, some live-stock, and the most valuable property belonging to state farms and machine-and-tractor stations. They also attempted, in so far as possible, to entrust the leadership of underground Party organisations and partisan units to the staunchest and most experienced Party members.

NOTES

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3

Sources, Motives, and Characteristics of the Soviet Partisan Movement

The Soviet population living in areas temporarily occupied by the Germans suffered immensely from the very first days of the Nazi invasion. Wherever they ruled, the Germans established regimes of bloody terror. They sacked and destroyed towns, villages, factories, and farms, and they attempted to expropriate all valuable factory and machine and tractor station equipment and remove it to Germany. They committed outrages against the civilian population in the towns and the countryside, and they deported hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians to Germany.

There was, and remains, considerable controversy concerning why a partisan struggle of such ferocity emerged in the occupied territories of the Soviet Union during the Second World War. This controversy is understandable. The fact is that, during the post-war period, the Soviet Partisan Movement has been both one of the most important factors influencing the consciousness of the Soviet population and an interesting topic for Western historiography. Literature in the Soviet Union and its descendant republics has celebrated this topic in countless novels, thousands of historical books and encyclopaedias, and innumerable articles dealing with specific aspects of the guerrilla fighting, such as the sabotage of enemy railway lines or partisan reconnaissance efforts. Poems, plays, movies, and television documentaries as well have focused on the 'heroic' activities of the partisan struggling in the enemy rear. All the while, however, most of these works were selective in their coverage and the judgements they rendered. They simply omitted certain setbacks in the history of partisan fighting and ignored some of the more unpleasant facts and figures related to it. That is why it is particularly important for current and future historians to set the record straight by illuminating these dark or unpleasant episodes in the history of the Soviet Partisan Movement. At the same time, while doing so, it is

important that they do not permit the pendulum of interpretation to swing too violently in the opposite direction. Specifically, for credibility's sake, they must in no way diminish the real role of the partisan struggle as an important component in the ultimate victory over Nazi Germany.

GERMAN OCCUPATION POLICIES AND POPULAR REACTION

Most authorities on the subject of Soviet partisan warfare believe correctly that the main source of the fierce guerrilla struggle was the terrible harshness displayed by both Nazi occupation authorities and also the German professional military toward the indigenous Soviet population. Not long before the invasion, Adolf Hitler had written, 'We do not want to convert the Russians to National Socialism, but to make them into our tools.'¹ The Fuehrer insisted that his generals understood very clearly that no holds were to be barred during the seizure of the Soviet Union. In March 1941, for example, he gathered before him his armed-forces chiefs and key Army field commanders and presented to them his understanding as to how to wage the war against the Soviet Union. The war against Russia, he declared, would be such that it could not be conducted in a 'knightly fashion'. The struggle, which was one of ideologies and racial differences, would have to be conducted with unprecedented, unmerciful, and unrelenting harshness. Therefore, all officers would have to rid themselves of obsolete and sentimental ideologies and be prepared to execute Hitler's orders without hesitation. German authorities were to liquidate all captured Soviet commissars at once and would excuse from all blame under international law those German soldiers fighting in the East who were guilty of breaking international law.² On 13 May 1941, in the name of the Fuehrer, General Wilhelm Keitel, the Chief of the German Armed Forces (OKW), issued a directive that limited the functions of German courts martial. Essentially, it replaced the traditional courts martial with a more primitive form of law that licensed German soldiers to kill as many people as possible. The directive indicated that Wehrmacht personnel could commit offences against the Soviet population or Red Army personnel without fear of prosecution, even if the act was a clear crime.

Nazi terror was much more severe in Eastern Europe than in the West because, in the Nazi leadership's view, the population in the East was racially inferior. The general German policy was, 'The fewer Slavs,

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the better.³ It was precisely this extreme harshness that forced many civilians and Red Army soldiers to enlist in the partisan effort. The choice of partisan service was a far more appealing prospect than enduring the atrocities associated with life under Nazi rule or, for encircled soldiers, questionable survival as a prisoner of war. The cruel short-sightedness of Nazi occupation policies quickly became apparent to civilian and soldier alike, in fact, almost at the outset of German aggression. At the same time, there were many Germans who, although they knew how best to pacify occupied regions, recoiled against the planned occupation programme because they realised it would alienate and antagonise the indigenous population. Even some German field commanders attempted to raise warnings to that effect. However, they did so in vain.

The fact was that, in many regions of the Soviet Union, the local population greeted the first German units with traditional 'bread and salt', which was a sign of great respect to distinguished guests. For example, Laqueur quotes from a Soviet novelist to state that advancing German troops in 1941 were welcomed as liberators by Belorussian peasants because they were dissatisfied with Stalin's collectivisation policies.⁴ After studying guerrilla warfare in the Ukraine, another author noted:

The Ukrainians fought both the Germany Army of occupation and the Soviet guerrillas who attempted to operate in their country. This was a natural consequence of the country's history. The Ukraine had declared its independence from Russia in 1917 and in 1920 was subjugated by the Red Army. Since then, various secret Ukrainian anti-Communist movements had operated with the objective of liberating their country from Soviet rule. Thus, because of a well-defined patriotic and political feeling, it was not astonishing that the Ukrainian people welcomed the German troops as liberators when they invaded Russia on 22 June 1941.⁵

A. Rhodes, a former correspondent of the British newspaper *The Daily Telegraph*, wrote that the Nazis missed the opportunity to win the support of the Ukrainian and Belorussian population, who, at first, greeted the Germans as 'liberators'.⁶ According to R. Asprey, the Germans could have corrected later their errors of 1941 and 1942 because the opportunity still existed to win popular support.⁷ No less than the commander of German Army Group Centre declared that he

could successfully fight the Soviet partisans only if Berlin promised to create a new Russian state and instituted a policy ending collectivisation.⁸

The Soviet authorities too were well aware of the popular disaffection in the occupied territories. For example, a Soviet document dated September 1941, which the Germans captured, contained instructions to Soviet agents and warned the agents about the popular hostility they were likely to encounter. It stated:

There are, however, many elements among the population who sympathise with the partisan movement and the Soviet government. But, since they fear the consequences, they are using utmost caution in their activities. Thus, it has happened that our agents have received signals to leave a village because the Germans were in it; they were given food and were advised to get out or be captured by the Germans.⁹

Although some high-ranking German officials understood that the German authorities could gain the trust of the local population only if they treated them justly, most others rejected this reality. The latter argued that partisan warfare would be seriously limited if the population possessed only minimum means of subsistence. If they had more than that, they claimed, or if goods were distributed fairly, the guerrilla bands would inevitably expand. Therefore, most of the Germans forgot the premier rule of anti-partisan warfare, namely that co-operation with the population is indispensable. Measures of extreme ruthlessness became the norm of German anti-partisan actions. Nazi doctrine glorified the use of violence and looked with distrust upon anyone who displayed inclinations toward showing mercy. For the Germans in the East, ruthlessness became not only a practical norm but also a rule.

The fact that the Soviet Union had not signed the Hague Convention of 1907, which established general rules for the humane conduct of war, in particular concerning treatment of war prisoners and the local population, only served to fuel the flames of Nazi atrocities in Russia. According to some Wehrmacht generals, Soviet non-adherence to the convention permitted them to commit crimes unrestrictedly, including torture. Special rules of behaviour applicable to German soldiers on the Soviet–German front contained instructions permitting them to kill Russians, be they old men, girls, or boys.¹⁰ Policies such as these overcame latent popular discontent with the Soviet government and led inexorably to the growth of partisan fighting strength. A respected Western account of German occupation policies correctly noted:

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In the beginning the bulk of the population on occupied soil appears to have given little support to the partisan groups organized by the Soviet authorities. The subsequent growth of the partisan movement, though materially assisted from the Soviet side, was possible only after two conditions had been fulfilled: German policy toward prisoners of war had become sufficiently known to induce many of the stragglers from Red Army divisions to throw in their lot with the partisans rather than surrender to the Germans; and German policy towards the civilian population became so ruthless that increasing numbers of the rank and file preferred the risks of partisan warfare to 'civilian life' under the Germans.¹¹

Thus, while, at first, many Soviet people viewed German forces as liberators, this euphoria quickly faded as the Nazis began implementing politics that alienated the population.¹² This was especially tragic for the Germans, for they missed a fortuitous opportunity to separate Stalin from the Soviet peoples. Stalin's brutal collectivisation programme, which was labelled by one astute Western scholar as a 'national tragedy', had remained deeply imbedded in the consciousness of many peasants and, quite naturally, conditioned them to be anti-Soviet.¹³ It was no wonder then, that Alfred Rosenberg, the Nazi Minister for the Eastern Territories, was optimistic about German prospects. He wrote that, at first, the Germans found in the Soviet Union, 'in contrast to the West, a people who went through all the terrors of Bolshevism, and who now, happy about their liberation, put themselves willingly at the disposal of Germany'.¹⁴ Therefore, when analysing Nazi policy towards the indigenous population in occupied Soviet territories, one must agree with Laqueur's conclusion, 'The partisan leaders [Soviet] would have found it much more difficult to attract recruits had the Germans treated the populace decently, but this would have been quite incompatible both with the character of the Nazi leaders, their doctrine, and their aims.'¹⁵

However, those historians who associated the immense scale of ensuing Soviet partisan warfare entirely with Nazi 'mistakes' in Belorussia and the Ukraine are only partially correct. Not without reason has Alexander Werth termed such an approach and understanding to be a 'gross over-simplification'.¹⁶ Without a doubt, in many cases, the harsh Nazi policy of repression of the indigenous population assisted the growth of the Soviet Partisan Movement. However, the real roots of this

growth go far deeper. There is strong reason to believe that, even if the Germans had behaved properly, Soviet guerrilla fighting would still have been on a large scale. After close analysis of German policy in the East, one historian concluded that Soviet partisan detachments operating in the enemy rear would have been numerous even if the Nazi attitude to local people had been merciful.¹⁷ What then were the other sources of resistance besides the brutality of the Germans? The most important was rather simple in concept but immensely significant in its ultimate effects. This was the force of traditional patriotism, specifically, and an immeasurable but burning desire to save Mother Russia at a time when she faced her greatest peril. This was not the first time such a phenomenon had occurred. In their deepest consciousness, the peoples of the multi-national Soviet State still remembered such critical periods as the long struggle against the Mongols in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and against Napoleon's army in 1812.

When assessing the motive forces behind the violent popular resistance to the Germans, both popular patriotism and German brutality played significant and measurable roles. Although in terms of sheer power, the former predominated, the latter requires more complete explanation. Nazis harshness toward the Soviet people was indeed exceptional, if not unprecedented. Recently, a British historian correctly noted:

[It] is unlikely that we in the West have a true idea of the scale and intensity of fighting between Russia and Germany. And particularly the intensity. The War in the East was fought with a ferocity and a hatred not experienced by the British, French or Americans . . . Nazi Germany was a double-sided monster with its gentlemanly face turned westward and its ruthless inhuman skull pointed east.¹⁸

Another historian echoed these sentiments, adding:

[The] sheer scale of the war, the extent of the sacrifices it demanded of the Soviet peoples daunted our imagination because we in the West have never experienced anything like it, even during that same war. This becomes clear even if we merely consider the stark fact that Soviet losses were probably some forty times these suffered by Britain or some seventy times these suffered by the United States. And this is without taking into account the immeasurably greater cruelty with which the Germans

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treated the Russians, the catastrophic shortages of housing, food and basic services with which the ordinary people had to cope.¹⁹

In reality, Hitler and his close entourage initially planned to exploit the many peoples of the occupied European countries for the benefit of Germany, in particular those who inhabited the East. However, Nazi occupation authorities in occupied Soviet territory treated the population with an indiscriminate mercilessness that undermined this objective. From their actions during the very first weeks of the war, it became clear that their real goals were nothing less than liquidation of a major portion of the local population and robbery of those who survived. In October 1941 Reichsminister Hermann Goering told Italian Foreign Minister Count Ciano:

This year between twenty and thirty million persons will die of hunger in Russia. Perhaps it is well that it should be so, for certain nations to be decimated. But even if it were not, nothing can be done about it. It is obvious that if humanity is condemned to die of hunger, the last to die will be our two peoples . . . In the camps for Russian prisoners they have begun to eat each other.²⁰

In vain, mothers attempted to hide their children from the Nazi slave traders. Sometimes they hid little boys in the snow – and they froze. They would cover little girls with hay – but the Nazis plunged bayonets through the haystacks. Boys 12 and 13 years of age walked along the streets of many towns, driven by rifle-butts as the Nazis herded children into slavery. At times they seized entire families and whole villages. They emptied many districts. Throughout the occupied territories, famine, typhus, and diphtheria reigned alongside the Gestapo's torture-chambers.

Soviet territories the Germans seized during the first year of the war formed two distinct parts. The first part consisted of lands stretching from the front lines to the rear boundary of operating Nazi army groups. This encompassed occupied territories in the Russian Republic, Crimea, the eastern regions of Belorussia, and also the eastern part of the Ukraine, the latter including Chernigov, Sumy and Khar'kov regions, and the Donbas. Administration of these territories was the responsibility of German military commands. The second part contained all the rest of the occupied territory. In this region, the Germans established two Reich Commissariats, named 'Ostland' [Eastland], which comprised Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, part of Belorussia, and the Leningrad region, and 'Ukraine', which embraced the major portion of the Ukraine and a

portion of southern Belorussia. In addition, the Germans assigned responsibility for the L'vov, Dorogobuzh, Stanislav, and Ternopol' regions of Ukraine to the Government General of Poland, which they had formed over a year before to administer those Polish territories not annexed directly to the German Reich. Finally, the Germans created a Rumanian 'Government General' between the Dnestr and Bug Rivers, called also by the name, 'Transnistria', which consisted of Moldavia and the southern portion of the Ukraine.²¹

The post-war International Tribunal at Nuremberg concluded that the Germans had thoroughly planned their occupation policies in Eastern Europe long before Hitler began his aggression against the Soviet Union. For example, in February 1933, in one of his first speeches to German generals, Hitler stressed that, in order to achieve Germany supremacy in Europe, it was necessary to seize the 'eastern territories' and to germanise their population. The German dictator knew very well what he wanted – a Nazi-ruled East whose resources the Germans could exploit for its own benefit and whose population could be enslaved in the service of the German master race.

Hitler and his associates formulated the basis for a 'New Order' in Europe in which '*Untermenschen*' [subhumans], meaning basically Jews, Slavic peoples, and several smaller ethnic groups, had no right to exist. According to Plan 'Ost' [East], which Hitler approved in May 1940, more than 30 million Slavs were to be exterminated during and after the war. The extermination programme called for by Plan 'Ost' began with Communist Party members, executive and administrative personnel, and Army commanding officers. Ultimately, only 15 million people in the conquered Soviet territories would be permitted to live.²² The plan called for the dismantling of all industries in the eastern territories and their transport to the Reich. Those who remained alive would have to work in agricultural pursuits so that they could produce food for the Germans. Thus, Hitler's real goal of securing a vast '*Lebensraum*' [living space] for Germany and the Germans, which he had enunciated in his 1920s memoirs, *Mein Kampf* [My Struggle], came ominously close to fruition in 1941 when German armies lunged across the Soviet frontier.

Documents unearthed by the Nuremberg War Crimes Tribunal vividly revealed Nazi cynicism. A particularly revealing document entitled, 'Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression', contained statements made by Heinrich Himmler, the infamous chief of the German SS, on 3 October 1943. In it he stated:

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What the nations can offer in the way of good blood of our type, we will take, if necessary by kidnapping their children and raising them here with us. Whether nations live in prosperity or starve to death like cattle interests me only in so far as we need them as slaves to our culture; otherwise it is of no interest to me. Whether 10,000 females fall down from exhaustion while digging an anti-tank ditch interests me only in so far as the antitank ditch for Germany is finished.²³

In addition to Russians, Ukrainians, and Belorussians, the Germans subjected other peoples of the Soviet Union to resettlement or annihilation. The same Plan 'Ost' mandated that thousands of people in the Baltic republics, Lithuanians, Latvians, and Estonians, also be resettled, or, as the plan recommended, 'got rid of'.²⁴

Special military and administrative directives and instructions required Nazi soldiers and other occupation authorities to implement these harsh terrorist methods. For example, on 13 May 1941, General Wilhelm Keitel, the Chief of the OKW, signed a directive instructing Nazi soldiers to exterminate the members of the local population and prisoners of war in the occupied lands, in particular, military political commissars and commanding officers.

In September 1941 another notorious order from Keitel specified the rationale for means of terror. In part, it read:

Without delay, we must undertake the most rigorous measures to affirm the authority of the occupying power and to avoid expansion of these attacks [partisan activities]. We must never lose sight of the fact that, in occupied countries, a human life is worth less than nothing and that intimidation is only possible through extraordinarily harsh measures. When taking reprisals for the death of a German soldier, it is essential to execute 50 to 100 Communists . . . Moreover, the method of execution should reinforce the impact of the punishment.²⁵

The Germans obeyed this order very scrupulously. For example, after driving a partisan detachment out of the Osveia District in northern Belorussia, the Germans burned down 158 villages, deported all remaining able-bodied men, and murdered all of the women, children and old people.²⁶ Special operational groups named 'Action groups' [*Einsatzgruppen*], which Himmler and his henchman Reinhard Heydrich organised to follow German armies into Russia, were responsible for

inflicting many of the horrors, privations, and atrocities on the indigenous population. Four such groups, labelled alphabetically groups 'A', 'B', 'C', and 'D', operated in the Baltic republics, the Smolensk and Moscow regions, at Kiev, and in the southern Ukraine, respectively.

German authorities ordered subunits belonging to these groups to enter villages and towns, gather up the local population, and particularly Jews, and then to transport them to their places of execution. Once there, in military fashion firing squads shot the kneeling or standing people and threw the corpses into ditches. Sometimes group leaders demanded that the victims lie down on the ground and be shot through the nape of the neck, because they believed such a method decreased 'the psychological burden' on the executioners.²⁷ As a result, very often the ensuing mass killings reached unprecedented proportions. In a period of only two days, 29 and 30 September 1941, tens of thousands of victims, mostly Jews, were shot in Kiev, the capital of the Ukraine. There, in a ravine named Babii Iar [Women's ravine], located in the north-western outskirts of Kiev, the Nazis buried a total of 100,000 men, women, and children they had murdered during the occupation.²⁸ Some of these executions were particularly horrible. For example, a German official named Heuser, the deputy chief of the security police in Minsk, liked to fasten his victims to poles, pour gasoline on them, and then set them on fire.²⁹

Some arguments did occur within the German administration over the best methods of policing the conquered Soviet lands. Hitler suggested that German occupation authorities be equipped with armoured cars. On the other hand, Goering, as Luftwaffe chief, doubted that armoured cars would be necessary and emphasised the usefulness of his air forces. He argued that his aircraft could drop bombs in case of riots and that the vast occupied area could be pacified as quickly as possible by, as he declared, shooting anyone who looked sideways.

To increase the efficiency of their pacification programme, meaning their ability to kill as many people as quickly and effectively as possible, the Germans developed new methods. Two Berlin firms invented 'gas vans', specifically constructed for the purpose of killing more cheaply and efficiently. The designers took special care that the actual purpose of these vans could not be detected from the outside. The vans looked like closed trucks, but were constructed so that, after the motor started, exhaust gases directed into the van could cause death within ten or fifteen minutes. According to 'Einsatz' group personnel, the vans' only shortcoming was that they could dispatch only 15 to 25 persons at a time,

which they considered far too few. By virtue of these grisly methods, the word 'death' now dominated the lives of the indigenous population. Not surprisingly, one old woman mournfully described the Nazis as 'worse than death'.³⁰

The Nazi command attempted to eliminate the growing Soviet Partisan Movement by these and other harsh retaliatory measures against the indigenous population. However, in the long run, the results were clearly negative and the harshness self-defeating. The endangered population instead fled to join the partisans. The process often developed as follows. The partisans would attack, rout, or destroy a small German unit or supply train near a certain village. Soon German reinforcements would arrive but find no trace of the partisans. In most cases, the nearby population was reluctant to provide any information regarding the attackers. The population realised that, after the Germans' departure, they would have to account for their treason to the partisans, and they well understood that the partisans were the real masters of the region. The Germans would then respond to the silence of the population by exacting revenge. They would shoot innocent peasants or simply burn down their village, thereby increasing the hatred of the people for the invaders and prompting many to join nearby partisan detachments.

Nazi creation of concentration camps in Germany and many occupied territories represented yet another glorious page in the history of the 'New Order', and accelerated the growth of the partisan movement. They established an elaborate network of such concentration camps in which they tortured, starved to death, shot or gassed millions of people. In the occupied Soviet territories, the Germans constructed camps near Minsk, Riga, Vilnius, Kaunas, L'vov, and many other cities. Initially, the Germans designed these odious installations to house Soviet prisoners of war, an enormous number of which the Germans captured during the first months of the war. The Germans exterminated many camp inmates by shooting rather than gassing them.

The Soviet prisoners of war were a particularly lucrative target of German repression. Essentially they were doomed from the start. The Germans began this extermination programme by eliminating all Red Army political instructors and commissars by any means, either on the spot of their capture or en route to the concentration camps.³¹ Additionally, German authorities recommended that all seriously wounded or seriously ill Red Army personnel be killed before they were sent to prisoner-assembly areas.³² General Reinecke, the head of the police and security department for war prisoners, officially declared that

the Red Army personnel should not be treated in the same fashion as the prisoners of war from Western armies. Instead their treatment should be ‘appropriate’ (to who they actually were).³³

A single incident described in an article in the journal *Novyi mir* [New world] in 1963 typified German treatment of Russian prisoners of war. As related by the prisoner of war, the incident occurred on 18 September 1941 during the German encirclement of the Soviet South-western Front forces. On that day the Germans assembled about 10,000 Russian prisoners in a village named Kovali near Kiev. After 15 SS-men in black uniforms had reached the scene, they summoned all ‘Commissars’, ‘Communists’, and ‘Jews’ to come forward. Some 300 soldiers responded. The Germans stripped them to the waist, and lined them up. Then an interpreter, a young man who spoke with a strong Galician accent (Galicia was a region of south-western Ukraine), shouted that some prisoners had to be still in hiding. Finally, the German executioners shot 400 Soviet soldiers after taking them away 10 at a time and ordering them to dig their own graves. The Germans then marched the surviving prisoners of war first to one camp and then to another. During the long march, constant hunger, cold, and humiliation deprived the prisoners of all semblance of human dignity. The narrator escaped, but he was only a lucky exception.³⁴

The Germans consigned the majority of captured Red Army commissioned officers and enlisted personnel to special concentration camps for prisoners of war. The density of inmates in such camps was exceptionally high, and the appallingly inhuman conditions inevitably led to mass mortality. When the cold autumn and winter days of 1941 arrived the Germans kept the camp inmates in the open air and deprived them of any medical assistance. An advisor named Dortch in Alfred Rosenberg’s Ministry prepared a report for his chief describing the situation in the Minsk concentration camp. His report indicated that more than 100,000 prisoners of war were crammed into an area equivalent in area to the Wilhelmplatz [square] in Berlin. Worse still, they were deprived of all food for six to eight days.³⁵

Russian sources now indicate that more than 3.5 million Red Army soldiers perished in Nazi concentration camps in the occupied territory of the Soviet Union.³⁶ Data collected by the historian Laqueur substantiate this figure. He claimed that, between the beginning of the German invasion and the end of 1941 alone, almost 4 million Soviet officers and soldiers became German prisoners of war, and that, by early 1942, only 1.1 million of these were still surviving.³⁷ The largest

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prisoner-of-war concentration camps were located at Ianovski (near L'vov in the Ukraine), where 200,000 Red Army soldiers perished, at Trostianets (near Minsk), where more than 150,000 died, at Salaspils (near Riga), where about 53,000 perished, and at Alytus (in Lithuania), where 60,000 were lost. Many other Soviet prisoners of war were sent back to Germany, but their fate was no brighter. On 28 February 1942, in a letter to Keitel, Rosenberg admitted that the lot of Soviet prisoners of war was a 'large scale tragedy' since the majority was dying of cold, malnutrition, and disease.³⁸

German plans to rob the population of the occupied regions economically by requisitioning essential foodstuffs and to condemn them to a perpetual state of hunger generated immense popular indignation. Worse still, Nazi authorities sought to destroy completely any remaining vestiges of heavy industry in some of these regions. This, the Germans believed, would decrease the number of workers, whom they considered the most undesirable and dangerous segment of the indigenous population in the East.³⁹

A number of German documents defined this programme of economic robbery and exploitation designed to benefit the German economy. The notorious Operational Plan 'Barbarossa' itself contained a special economic section subtitled 'Oldenburg'. This section envisaged institution of an elaborate series of measures to exploit Soviet material resources. Hitler entrusted Hermann Goering, whom he had placed in charge of the economic exploitation of the Soviet Union, with the implementation of these measures. On 29 April 1941, a conference presided over by Hitler discussed and adopted the main provisions in the economic section of Plan 'Barbarossa'. The so-called 'Green File' of the post-war Nuremberg International War Crimes Tribunal, contained these special directives designed to rob the occupied Soviet territories.⁴⁰ According to these records, Goering and his Economic Staff East specified that the food from Russia's southern 'black-earth belt' could not be diverted to the people living in the destroyed industrial regions. Instead, workers and their families in these regions would simply be left to starve, and Russia's immense food production would go, quite naturally, to sustain the Germans. Moreover, German authorities considered any attempt to save the population from death by starvation as an effort to reduce Germany's war potential.

On the eve of the German attack on the Soviet Union, Rosenberg, the Minister of Eastern Territories, addressed his closest collaborators who were responsible for ruling occupied Soviet territory. He announced

that the Germans had absolutely no reason or obligation to feed the Russian people with the foodstuffs from occupied territories, and he warned that the future would be very hard for the Russians. Indeed, it was.

Professional German officers and soldiers, such as General Walter von Reichenau, the commander of the crack German Sixth Army, also committed many crimes against the Soviet people. On 6 October 1941, von Reichenau issued a special order to kill any Russian who showed even a slight sign of hostility toward Germans and particularly toward rank-and-file Nazi servicemen. There were many examples of this order being fulfilled. In September 1942, for example, German soldiers burned alive 150 inhabitants of the village of Zelenaiia Putosh' in Smolensk District, including many old people and children.⁴¹ While employing the barbaric method of using the local populace to clear mines, the commander of the German 102nd Infantry Division is said to have threatened to shoot any local inhabitant who resisted orders to walk through minefields. In this instance, all of the participants were blown up and killed by mines.⁴² I. Alekseenko, a resident of the village of Krasnye Gorki in Leningrad District, witnessed a horrible scene committed by German soldiers in his village, when an old woman was tied up and thrown into a burning stove. Her two granddaughters, aged 12 and 14, were then raped and shot.⁴³

A voluminous report of the underground Party cell in the Dedovichi region of Leningrad District, which was captured by the Germans, contains a paragraph about Nazis' harshness toward local inhabitants who assisted the Soviet guerrillas. It states:

In the village of Khokhlovo, the agent Ivanova was bestially tortured by the Germans. When her corpse was found she was unrecognisable. [Her] hands and feet were broken, the skin was torn off, a part of it hung down in shreds, and on her back alone were seventeen knife wounds. In spite of the inhuman interrogation by the sadists, the comrade revealed nothing. Comrade Osipov, Party candidate, was captured and bestially tortured. His eyes were cut out, and a hot wire was pulled through his nose.⁴⁴

Whether real or apocryphal, such incidents of German Army cruelty evidenced everyday Nazi practices that only stimulated partisan warfare. Nevertheless, the initial signs of the Soviet guerrilla fighting even pleased Hitler as he woefully failed to appreciate the real scale and potential of the Soviet Partisan Movement. On 16 July 1941, less than a

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month after the beginning of his Soviet campaign, Hitler officially declared at a conference at his East Prussian headquarters that it was good that the Soviet authorities had ordered partisan warfare behind the German lines. This, he said, was so because 'It enables us to eradicate everyone who opposes us'.⁴⁵ In January 1946, during the post-war trials of German criminals in the city of Kiev, General Scheer, the chief of the Security Police, said that German authorities intended to annihilate the greater part of the population under the guise of the struggle against Soviet partisans in the Ukraine. Then, he said, they were going to resettle the remaining population in the northern territories.⁴⁶ During his testimony at the Nuremberg Trials, General Erich von dem Bach-Zelewski, who was responsible for the anti-partisan campaign, reinforced this opinion. He stated that, if the progress of the war in the East had not worsened, the Germans could have killed about 30 million inhabitants of the Soviet Union's southern regions under the guise of fighting against Soviet partisans.⁴⁷

Thus, the Germans treated the Soviet population very harshly from the very beginning of the war. This prompted M. Kalinin, the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union, to later remark, 'The crimes the Nazis committed on Soviet soil during the war years appeal even to the stones for vengeance'.⁴⁸ It must be admitted, however, that the terrible cruelty shown by the German invaders often led to equally severe treatment of German captives by Red partisans. In fact, one Western authority on partisan warfare underscored this shared ruthlessness, stating:

Ruthlessness was a basic principle in both guerrilla and anti-guerrilla warfare in the Soviet Union during WW II . . . By savage action did the guerrillas seek to fight the invader and neutralize the collaborator; by savage action also did the invaders hope to rule the Russian people and defeat the partisan. Its use played a key role in both the nature and outcome of the struggle.⁴⁹

THE ROLE OF PATRIOTISM

In addition to German repression and favourable terrain conditions, the most important factor contributing to the large-scale partisan struggle in the occupied Soviet territories was the powerful force of Russian patriotism. This factor had always played a significant role in organising guerrilla resistance to enemy invasion during all of Russian history,

particularly when the fate of the state depended on the patriotic support of the popular masses. For example, the Patriotic War of 1812 against Napoleon was, and still is, remembered by many generations of people living in the republics of the former Soviet Union. Admittedly, in 1941 many in the populace harboured hatred of Stalin's Communist regime, and, in some regions, those disaffected greeted the invaders as their liberators from NKVD repression. At the same time, however, many people who had suffered under Soviet administration also understood that German rule really meant subjugation, and perhaps even the liquidation of the entire nation. They instinctively knew that to withstand such an ominous invasion required a united struggle against it. This inner spirit of unity on the part of virtually the entire nation played an exceptionally important role in the struggle against German domination.

The events that took place in Leningrad both symbolised and helped solidify that spirit. When the populace and partisan fighters in occupied regions adjacent to the city learned of the parlous food situation in Leningrad and the heroic struggle of Leningrad's citizenry to endure, they organised meetings in their villages to collect food supplies to be sent to the beleaguered townspeople.

Conditions in Leningrad reached desperate proportions during the first winter of the war. One city official was reported to have said:

To fill their empty stomachs, to reduce the intense sufferings caused by hunger, people would look for incredible substitutes. They would try to catch crows or rooks, or any cat or dog that had still somehow survived: they would go through medical chests in search of castor oil, hair oil, vaseline or glycerine; they would make soup or jelly out of carpenter's glue (scraped off wallpaper or broken up furniture). But not everyone in the enormous city had such supplementary sources of 'food'. Death would overtake people in all kinds of circumstances: while they were in the streets, they would fall down and never rise again; or in their houses, where they would fall asleep and never awake; in factories, where they would collapse while doing a job of work. There was no transport, and the dead body would usually be put on a hand-sleigh drawn by two or three members of the dead man's family; often wholly exhausted during the long trek to the cemetery they would abandon the body half-way, leaving it to the authorities to deal with.⁵⁰

Therefore, the additional foodstuffs sent to Leningrad by local partisans also increased the local population's enthusiasm for the struggle with the Germans and prompted some '*kolkhozniki*' [collective farmers] to themselves join partisan units. This support materially, if not dramatically, assisted the heroic defenders of the city to survive an unprecedented siege of 900 days.⁵¹

As early as 1941, the State and Party orchestrated a programme to collect money from the population of the occupied regions for use in the 'defence of the Motherland'. Subsequently, many local inhabitants contributed millions of roubles of loans to the state. In total, during the entire war, the Soviet population made donations to the defence fund amounting to 118,000 million roubles, which was 9,600 million roubles more than total state expenditure in 1942.⁵² This represented tremendous support by the people for their Red Army in the field. These cases indicate that an intense feeling of patriotism motivated most of the population of the occupied territories. They understood the necessity to unite when confronted by mortal danger. Regrettably, today, the population in the former Soviet Union's republics lacks this feeling of unity while struggling to meet their challenging economic and territorial problems.

German General Karl Drum later identified the patriotism of the local populace as one of the most powerful sources of the partisan movement:

The conditions which made the successful conduct of partisan warfare possible were as follows: . . . Russians' patriotism, which is so great that they will make any sacrifice; their fatalistic attitude; the conviction inculcated into them, that their communist 'achievements' were endangered; all these characteristics contributed to their self-sacrificing spirit.⁵³

German General Heinz Guderian also stressed the important role patriotism played in the Soviet struggle against the Nazis. In late October 1941 during the advance on Moscow, while serving as the commander of Second Panzer Army, Guderian met an elderly retired Tsarist General in the city of Orel. The retired Russian general, who vehemently opposed the Soviet regime, told the panzer commander, 'If you had only come 20 years ago, we should have welcomed you with open arms. But now it is too late. We were just beginning to get on our feet, and now you arrive and throw us back 20 years so that we will have to start from the beginning all over again. Now we are fighting for Russia, and in that case we are all united.'⁵⁴

Patriotic fervour gripped not only the population of the occupied Soviet lands but also that of the entire country. This was reflected by the fact that, during the war, 5.5 million persons donated blood for the Red Army, including 90 per cent of the female population and over 70 per cent of the youth. From 1941 to 1945, these donors supplied about one million litres of blood to hospitals, thus saving the lives of millions of wounded soldiers.⁵⁵ Most of the blood donors waived normal payment due to them for supplying their blood and instead remitted the money to the national defence fund. In Leningrad alone, these contributions totalled 1,350,000 roubles.⁵⁶ At least in part, this in-kind donation by the population at large and the devoted work of Soviet medical personnel made it possible to return to the fighting ranks 72.3 per cent of the wounded and 90 per cent of the sick.⁵⁷

The citizens of Moscow displayed their deep feeling of patriotism during the tense days in late 1941 when the Wehrmacht was attempting to break through to the Soviet capital. During October and November 1941, 120,000 Moscovites reported to the front as people's volunteers, some forming rifle divisions that were immediately integrated into Red Army ranks. Soviet authorities formed numerous workers' military battalions to work on the Moscow defences, and more than 500,000 women, boys, and girls took active part in constructing defences on the approaches to the city.⁵⁸

Even those who did not actively join partisan detachments were, in general, anti-German, and they considered it their patriotic duty to do all in their power to frustrate Nazi efforts in the occupied territories. Often this took the form of passive resistance. They frequently refused to serve in local administrations and resisted forced service in German paramilitary units or the police. When providing his impressions concerning the Belorussian population during the German occupation, Alfred Rosenberg remarked that, due to prolonged Communist rule in the republic, it was very difficult to find 'positive' elements among the Belorussians who could be relied upon and used in the system of self-government.⁵⁹

On the other hand, in most cases the partisan leadership paid considerable attention to attentive and proper treatment of the population in areas where partisan formations operated. They well understood that the indigenous population's support was vital to the success of guerrilla warfare. A report sent by a partisan detachment to its next higher headquarters in the summer of 1942, which the Germans intercepted, illustrated this attentiveness. This report, a portion of which dealt with

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medical assistance given by a partisan medical station to the local population from autumn of 1941 through the summer of 1942, stated:

In the beginning we had only two medical workers, who practised privately. One of them was shot during a December raid. This medical help was not sufficient for the population, so a new *troika* [threesome] therefore opened a medical station, which was headed by the woman medical worker named Shcherbakova. From 23 March to date, 1,830 civilians and 162 partisans have been treated.⁶⁰

Judging by the number of patients the medical station served and the relatively small size of the detachment, the majority of the station's patients must have been sick local inhabitants.

ROLE OF THE RED ARMY SOLDIER

One of the characteristic features of the Soviet Partisan Movement was the indisputable fact that former Red Army soldiers played an important role in it. Given the immense striking power of the German military machine in 1941, particularly its panzer and motorised units, within the initial months of war, the Germans were able to encircle a staggering number of Red Army personnel. According to German accounting, during the Battle for Kiev (September 1941), they encircled about 600,000 Soviet troops.⁶¹ Subsequently, during their drive on Moscow, by mid-October 1941, they had encircled several more Soviet armies in the Viaz'ma and Briansk regions totalling another 650,000 soldiers.⁶²

As a result of these massive encirclements and staggering human losses, the German Army drove Red Army forces to the very gates of Leningrad, a city which Peter the Great had built as his Russian capital on the Baltic, and Moscow, the ancient city chosen to be the capital of the former Soviet Union. Inspired by these achievements, on 3 October 1941 in an address to the German people, Hitler officially proclaimed the collapse of the Soviet Union. He optimistically stated: 'I declare today, and I declare it without any reservation, that the enemy in the East has been struck down and will never rise again . . . Behind our troops there already lies a territory twice the size of the German Reich when I came to power in 1933.'⁶³ Although the situation the Soviet state faced was far from favourable, Hitler clearly underestimated the power of the Red Army. To say the least, his public boast turned out to be premature since, soon after the initial period of spectacular Nazi successes, the

Germans suffered severe reverses in November and December 1941 at Rostov and Moscow. Moreover, measurable demoralisation accompanied the German Army's unprecedented forced withdrawal from the gates of Moscow.

Many Red Army soldiers who were encircled during the series of Soviet disasters in summer and autumn 1941 managed to evade their tormentors. Some crossed the front lines to rejoin Red Army units, but many thousands more remained in the enemy rear and either organised or joined partisan formations and detachments. Many of these fought for the Soviet State because they came to believe that the atrocities of Stalin's regime would never again be repeated. In his book *Victims of Yalta*, N. Tolstoy cites the words of a former Red Army hero, Victor Nekrasov, as he described his motives and the motives of many others as they continued to struggle in support of Soviet power. In Nekrasov's words, he fought on, 'So that the terrible past would never return, and it was with this hope that I had continued my adherence to the Communist Party.'⁶⁴

Of course, to a considerable extent, this feeling was reinforced by utter fear of Nazi captivity, given the terrible stories circulating about Nazi treatment of prisoners of war. Thus, both hope and fear combined to produce a substantial pool of trained leaders and soldiers available for enlistment in partisan detachments during the formative stage of the Soviet Partisan Movement. At a time when experienced fighters were needed most, these Soviet soldiers, commissars, and commissioned officers provided the entire partisan movement the professional touch and expertise which it clearly lacked at the beginning of the war. Professional military men materially assisted the partisan movement in growing into an effective tool of the Soviet war effort.

German sources confirmed this state of affairs. A German account of the situation in autumn 1941 in the rear area of German Army Group Centre stated, 'Far in the rear area of Second Panzer Army and Second Army, in the forests south and north of Briansk, dispersed Soviet elements that had escaped from the Briansk pocket after the battle of encirclement, which lasted from 2 to 18 October 1941, formed strong partisan units that were constantly resupplied by air and that constituted a threat to the Luftwaffe'.⁶⁵ The fact that so many guerrilla groups seemed to form spontaneously gave rise to the main argument associated with the myth, 'widely disseminated in postwar émigré circles, that the whole guerrilla warfare in the occupied Soviet territory was a spontaneous national uprising against the German invasion'.⁶⁶

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Documents in the Ukrainian State Archives indicate that one of the largest Ukrainian partisan formations, commanded by Hero of the Soviet Union N. Saburov, which numbered as many as 7,700 fighters by the spring of 1944, was born in autumn 1941 from Red Army soldiers that the Germans had bypassed.⁶⁷ Likewise, on 14 September 1941, Colonel V. Chlebtsov, the commander of the 110th Rifle Division, formed a partisan detachment in the Klichev region of Mogilev District (in Belorussia), which consisted primarily of Red Army soldiers from his own division. This detachment fought actively in the Klichev area until it rejoined regular Red Army forces on 13 December 1941.⁶⁸ A partisan detachment headed by former border guard officer, M. Prudnikov, was also active in Belorussia in the autumn and winter of 1941–42. Subsequently, its strength increased to 3,000 fighters, and the detachment reorganised into a full brigade. Having executed some large-scale operations in the enemy rear area, the brigade's commander became a well-known partisan leader, and, for his unit's performance, he was awarded the highest Soviet military decoration – Hero of the Soviet Union.⁶⁹

In general, analysis indicates that the active and massive participation of former Red Army officers, commissars, and soldiers in the activation of partisan detachments in the occupied areas of the Soviet Union was, on the whole, beneficial. As a rule, professional soldiers were well trained and knew how to employ most, if not all, new types of weaponry. More important still, they were experienced in conducting proper reconnaissance, and in processing information and sending it to the next higher headquarters. Professional soldiers understood combat tactics, where and when to concentrate their efforts, and how to disperse and reassemble their partisan forces in required areas. One authority in partisan warfare emphasised that their most valuable contribution was the inculcation of greater discipline among the partisans and education of other partisan fighter in the handling and employment of weapons.⁷⁰ In addition, their positive example encouraged passive partisan units to become more aggressive. Finally, military professionals were less likely to succumb to the temptation of magnifying their achievements in reports to higher headquarters.

The number of ex-Red Army soldiers in partisan formations fluctuated, based upon the period of the war, and varied from sector to sector of the Soviet–German front. Naturally, the percentage of Red Army soldiers in partisan units was highest during the initial stage of the war, but this ratio fell over time. Many sources argue this point. For example, H. Baldwin states that, in the beginning of the war, Red Army

servicemen made up the majority in Soviet guerrilla bands.⁷¹ Cooper states that they made up 60 per cent of guerrilla forces in 1942 and 40 per cent in 1943.⁷² Finally, J. Armstrong claims they constituted on average 40 per cent of partisan strength throughout the war.⁷³

Official Russian sources, however, indicate that this percentage was considerably less. One important qualification is necessary when trying to determine an accurate estimate. If one counts only Red Army soldiers from units the Germans encircled in 1941, the proportion of Red Army soldiers will be quite low. On the other hand, if one counts former servicemen who had received Red Army combat training since the Russian Civil War and had served in Red Army units before Nazi invasion but were in reserve when the Second World War began, the figures will be quite high. Archival materials indicate that, throughout the entire war, the percentage of Red Army soldiers in partisan formations in Belorussia, where many of the major 1941 encirclements occurred, amounted to only 11.16 per cent of the overall partisan force.⁷⁴

In some areas, however, at the beginning of the partisan movement, the percentage of former Red Army soldiers fighting as partisans was rather substantial. For example, by the end of 1941, partisan detachments in the Crimea numbered 1,315 former Red Army soldiers. This constituted about 35 per cent of the entire strength of Crimean partisans.⁷⁵ During the same period, some 10,000 former servicemen joined partisan units in the Orel region.⁷⁶ All this being said, one has to agree with the judgement of some Western observers who claim that the role of Red Army soldiers in the partisan movement requires significant additional analysis.⁷⁷

THE ROLE OF COMMUNISTS AND KOMSOMOL' MEMBERS

Some partisan formations were organised from the remnants of so-called Soviet destruction battalions [*istrebitel'nye batal'ony*].⁷⁸ Such battalions averaged about 100 men each, most of whom were Party and Komsomol' members wearing civilian clothes. These battalions, considered as paramilitary units, were sometimes further grouped into regiments. Their primary missions were to provide rear-area security for Soviet troops, fight with Nazi agents, defend against enemy airborne attacks, and, after a successful German advance, destroy all key installations in the German rear not demolished by the retreating Red Army. When the enemy advanced, destruction battalions were ordered to evade, escape detec-

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tion, and then operate as partisan formations in the Nazi rear areas. Once there, like partisan units, they conducted sabotage, attacked German messengers and couriers, and generally did all in their power to disrupt enemy communications lines.⁷⁹

After deciding to organise and exploit resistance in the enemy rear areas, Communist Party authorities paid greater particular attention to activating and manning partisan units. Thereafter, the personnel from the local population manned most partisan detachments and groups. Often partisan detachments activated in advance of German occupation had destruction battalions as their nuclei, since they too were formed on a regional basis, according to the time-honoured territorial principle.

At first, in addition to their complement of Red Army soldiers, some partisan units consisted mainly of Party and Young Communist League members, representatives of the NKVD, and Soviet activists. The High Command and Party considered these partisan formations as the most reliable basis upon which to enlarge the entire partisan movement. To inflict maximum losses on the enemy in his rear areas, in 1941 the Soviet High Command also employed border-guard regiments under the control of the NKVD. The NKVD activated individual commando [*komanda*] groups and detachments on the basis of these regiments and dispatched them into the enemy rear. For example, in the Soviet North-western Front sector, commando units executed several deep raids to disrupt the enemy rear and collect intelligence. In December 1941 the *front* reorganised these groups into a single commando regiment to be employed in future airdrops behind the enemy front line.⁸⁰

PARTISAN MISSIONS AND ORGANISATION

The missions assigned to partisan formations often varied from region to region in accordance with the Soviet High Command's strategic plans. It was understood, however, that their overall task was to combat the German invaders by every means possible without becoming decisively engaged in actions that could lead to the formation's complete destruction. The strength and organisation of partisan formations also varied region by region throughout the course of the war. Often designations assigned to partisan forces were in no way indicative of their real strength. The most preferred designation 'brigade', which first came into official use in spring of 1942, certainly did not do so.⁸¹

Analysis of the organisational structure of the Soviet partisan forma-

tions demonstrated that they also differed significantly from those operating in other countries, for instance, in Yugoslavia, where partisans formed divisions and armies. In fact, they possessed no official establishment or TO&E (Table of Organisation and Equipment [establishment]) organisation, and they varied in both strength and armament. Therefore, they included such force structures as partisan groups and '*druzhiny*' [fighting squads or teams], companies and platoons, detachments, battalions, regiments, and brigades. Organisation depended, first and foremost, on the area of operations in which the force operated. For example, a large partisan unit named '*Batia*' ['Father' in Belorussian dialect], which consisted of 10 partisan detachments, was formed in the north-western portion of the Smolensk District in February 1942.⁸² On 16 February 1942, a central headquarters for the Smolensk District partisans was activated in the area of Dorogobuzh. It consisted of representatives from larger partisan detachments named '*Uragan*' [Hurricane], '*Dedushka*' [Grandfather], and '*Ded*' [Old Man]. Its first major mission was to co-operate with Soviet cavalry and airborne forces, then operating in the Viaz'ma region in German Army Group Centre's rear area. In May 1942 this amalgamation of detachments were reorganised into the headquarters of the 1st Smolensk Partisan Division, which subsequently commanded the 6,000 fighters of the three partisan detachments.⁸³ This division fought pitched battles with German forces as Lieutenant General P. A. Belov's famed 1st Cavalry Corps and the remnants of 4th Airborne Corps fought their way out of the German rear area in April and May 1942 to the safety of Soviet lines. The partisan division, however, remained behind to continue its critical struggle.

When partisan forces were activated in territories under Red Army control, as a rule their organisation was strictly military and resembled the structure of regular Red Army units, that is, with companies, platoons, squads, and combat support elements such as communications, intelligence, and supply sections. The average strength of these units normally did not exceed 50–75 men.⁸⁴

PARTISAN SUPPORT AND LOGISTICS

The local population generally sympathised with the former Red Army soldiers who were to play such a significant role in partisan warfare. Often the indigenous peasantry supplied partisans with foodstuffs and civilian clothes and showed them the safest roads to escape from German

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encirclement. When analysing the attitude of the population in the occupied areas of the Russian Republic, the American historian Gerhard Weinberg remarked that, even before the German defeats during the winter of 1941–42, local inhabitants assisted Red Army prisoners of war and other stragglers to escape from Nazi captivity.⁸⁵ Other sources noted that German anti-partisan operations were often frustrated when local inhabitants forewarned partisans about such actions.⁸⁶ The former Party boss of Belorussia, P. Ponomarenko, who in 1942 became the chief of the Central Headquarters of the Partisan Movement, later wrote about the early months of the German occupation of Belorussia. In an official memorandum dated 19 August 1941, he stated that, despite the German threats to kill the local population, they assisted bypassed Red Army units by giving them their last meagre provisions and by treating and concealing the wounded.⁸⁷

Another American scholar cites the words of an American war correspondent in Moscow, who noted, 'I doubt whether any army in the world has ever received such total support from its civil population as the Red Army received in the first two years of the German invasion'.⁸⁸ The Nazi press of the period also recognised the support rendered by the local population to partisan formations. For example, on 13 April 1942, an author wrote in the *Kölnische Zeitung*, 'The support provided for the enemy by the civilian population, often in the form of Partisan Warfare which is particularly cultivated by the Bolsheviki, makes the fight very trying for the German soldiers. These fights on and behind the front, are extremely severe, imposing all levels of hardship and privations.'⁸⁹

NATIONAL MOVEMENTS AND COLLABORATION

Obviously, this generally kind and supportive treatment of Red Army soldiers by the local population was far from universal. In some cases, particularly in regions inhabited by people disaffected with the Soviet regime and local nationalists, the local populace was not only unfriendly to them but also downright hostile. Thus, Cooper noted with good reason that, owing to the hostile attitude of the local population of the Ukraine, the first partisan units in this republic were completely annihilated.⁹⁰

In fact, many different nationalist groups and a substantial number of people collaborated with the Nazis and fought hard against the Soviet partisans. This was true in virtually all of the Soviet Republics, includ-

ing the Ukraine (particularly the western part), Belorussia, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and elsewhere in the southern Soviet Union. In the Crimea, for example, in 1942 the local Tartar population offered their assistance to the Nazis when they completely occupied the peninsula. The situation was particularly bad in the Caucasus region, where the Kalmyks and a number of the Caucasian peoples, including the Chechens, Ingush, and some other peoples, served the Germans willingly. In many cases and to differing degrees, the Nazi occupation authorities themselves instigated these nationalist-based anti-Soviet organisations and activities, in some cases even before the war began. Simple logic motivated the Germans to do so; they simply wanted the peoples as allies in the struggle against Bolshevism.

At the same time, the local nationalists saw in Nazi Germany the means by which their independence, ethnic identity, and power could be restored. Many of these people's fathers and grandfathers had fought in White Army units against the Bolsheviks during the Russian Civil War. Many had continued that struggle into the 1920s. Other nationalistic movements had emerged during Tsarist times and flourished during the First World War. This was particularly applicable to nationalist movements in the Ukraine, Belorussia, and the Caucasus. Late in the World War and during the Civil War, many of these movements had formed local governments, claimed separate status or autonomy from the Soviet Union, refused loans to the government, and demanded the total withdrawal of the Red Army. From 1918 through 1920, the Ukrainian national Rada [Parliament] in Kiev spoke of extending the boundaries of the Ukraine to include many of the rich agricultural lands of southern Russia and created a national army to carry out this threat. During the waning stages of the World War, Ukrainian premier Vinnichenko went so far as to talk of a separate peace with Germany.

These national groups welcomed the growth of Nazi Germany's power and saw in collaboration a means by which they could achieve their ambitious goals. Thus, in many cases, the roots of their anti-Soviet activity took hold long before German aggression against the Soviet Union. Quite naturally, the Germans played upon these nationalist sentiments. The plans the Germans drew up in Berlin for colonising and 'mastering' the occupied Soviet territories allocated roles for many of these different nationalist organisations.⁹¹ Senior Nazi officials took into account the boastful reports filed by Abwehr [German intelligence] agents concerning the power and authority of such nationalist organisations, primarily in the Ukraine, such as the Petluras, the Hetmanites,

and the OUN (the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists). They hoped that, once the nationalists appeared alongside the Germans in the conquered lands, the majority of the local population would support them. Therefore, when the nationalists intensified their activities in the occupied territories in the wake of the German onslaught, they launched a vigorous propaganda campaign for 'close co-operation with Greater National Socialist Germany'.⁹²

Some citizens of Russia, the Ukraine, Belorussia, and other republics of the former Soviet Union had even graduated from special German intelligence schools during the First World War, and, subsequently, the SS and Abwehr employed them for secret missions in the Soviet rear area. Analysing the relevance of these partisan experiences to future partisan operations, in particular, Abwehr sabotage activity in the Soviet rear, one British observer wrote, 'Although these teams were small in number, they created such communications, supply and moral problems in the Soviet rear that initially one and later two entire NKVD regiments had to be allotted to guard the rear of each Soviet field army'.⁹³ According to Kozlov, a former Abwehr agent and graduate of the secret Nazi spy school named, 'Saturn', which was located in the Belorussian city of Borisov, during the war the NKVD network succeeded in detecting 127 agents prepared by this school.⁹⁴ Kozlov still resides in Belorussia.

The Nazi agents also dispatched many agents into Soviet rear areas to conduct diversionary operations in areas which the Germans had been forced to abandon. They had orders to implement the Wehrmacht's barbarous policy of 'scorched earth'. Accordingly, they destroyed indiscriminately all installations and property of use to the advancing Red Army or to the Soviet authorities as they carried out their post-war reconstruction of the ruined Soviet economy. A British expert correctly observed that the Soviet Union's most productive industrial regions were devastated twice over by such 'scorched-earth' policies. During 1941 and 1942, the Red Army and its destruction battalions implemented such a policy during their retreat, and in 1943 and 1944, the Nazis did the very same thing.⁹⁵ Quite often, the German used the nationalists in their service to commit the worst atrocities, for example, the terrible crime of burning the Belorussian village of Khatyn with all its inhabitants. Only recently it was revealed that Khatyn village was not destroyed by the Germans, but instead was destroyed by a police battalion made up of Ukrainians and Belorussians.⁹⁶ To a certain degree, local peasants disaffected by Soviet rule

and desirous of national independence supported the activities of various nationalistic groups.⁹⁷

However, the German authorities did not welcome all nationalist initiatives and activities. Immediately after the German Army seized the western Ukrainian city of L'vov, on 30 June 1941, local nationalists established their own city administration and announced over the radio the restoration of their national liberation. This decisive step caught the Germans by surprise. Soon after, they responded by arresting all members of the newly formed Ukrainian national government and confining them in various concentration camps.⁹⁸ The nationalist response was forceful. They formed the 'Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists' (OUN) and organised small detachments of the partisan fighters, which on 14 October 1942 coalesced into the Ukrainian Guerrilla Army [*Ukrainska Povstancha Armia*], known commonly as the UPA.⁹⁹ This Army, which later numbered about 200,000 men, fought against both Germans and Soviet partisans. In 1943 it was the main threat to General S. A. Kovpak's Soviet partisans when they conducted their famous raid through Ukraine towards Galicia and the Carpathian Mountains.¹⁰⁰ Soviet propagandists variously labelled the UPA and its members as 'traitors', 'Fascist Nationalists', and 'Banderovite murderers' (Stefan Bandera being a Ukrainian Nationalist leader, who was murdered by Soviet agents in Munich on 15 October 1959).¹⁰¹ In the summer of 1943, the Banderovites eliminated all opposition from other major nationalist factions and, thereafter, dominated the Ukrainian nationalist movement.¹⁰²

Armed UPA formations conducted several successful raids against Soviet forces and objectives. One of the most important incidents took place on 29 February 1944, when UPA forces ambushed General of the Army N. F. Vatutin, the commander of the 1st Ukrainian Front, and his powerful military escort. Although the nationalist partisans mortally wounded General Vatutin, the chief of staff of the UPA's Northern Region and the commander of its regional organisation also perished in the engagement.¹⁰³

The most influential local Belorussian nationalists during the period of Nazi occupation were such figures as Akinchitz, Godlevsky, and Kozlovsky. They began organising their pro-Fascist Belorussian National-Socialist Party in 1933 and later attempted to contact Hitler and assure him that the newly formed party was ready to provide any assistance possible to the Nazis.

Stalin's arrest and extermination of many people before the Second

World War began fuelling the fires of local and regional nationalism since the local populations well remembered these mass killings. Even today the gruesome toll of the 'Great Terror' of the 1920s and 1930s cannot be accurately determined. Thus, estimates vary wildly. Dmitri Volkogonov, Stalin's well-known recent biographer, states that about 3.5–4 million people were victims of state repression between 1937 and 1939, and, of this number, 650,000 were executed. Further, he claimed that, between 1 October 1936 and September 1938, about 500 high-ranking Party and Soviet officials alone were shot every day.¹⁰⁴ Even relatives from Stalin's immediate entourage were purged, including those of Molotov, Kalinin, Kaganovich, and even Stalin's personal secretary, Poskrebyshev. Another prominent Russian historian, Roy Medvedev, a former People's Deputy of the Soviet Union, says the total figure reached 40 million, including many peasants who perished as a result of Stalin's forced collectivisation.¹⁰⁵

More important still from the nationalists' standpoint was that, while Stalin's victims lived in all Soviet republics, the bulk of them lived in republics that the Germans occupied after their invasion of the Soviet Union. Moreover, this terror affected every segment of the population. For example, the incident that took place in Kuropaty near the Belorussian capital of Minsk, which involved the shooting of no less than 30,000 victims, has received considerable publicity. In fact, some sources claim that more than 300,000 were shot in that horrible incident.¹⁰⁶ An official Belorussian government committee began investigating the Kuropaty tragedy in 1988, but even today it is not clear how many people were actually shot there. In 1993 ensuing popular pressure compelled the Belorussian government to reopen its investigation and determine its true scope.¹⁰⁷

The principal missions of the major nationalistic organisations operating in all occupied republics, including the Ukraine, Belorussia, the Baltic region, and the Caucasian republics, was essentially identical. They assisted the Germans in the struggle against Soviet partisans, in transporting labourers to Germany, in restoring the industrial potential of the occupied territories for the benefit of Germany, and in organising the shipment of raw materials and foodstuffs from occupied regions. In addition, they conducted reconnaissance and intelligence collection activities for the Germans and performed terrorist acts, for which they received training at special Nazi Abwehr schools. After graduation, the Germans often dispatched them to areas of partisan operations, where they advised on and participated in anti-partisan activities.

The anti-partisan activity was a significant task since the premier German anti-partisan tactic was to turn one partisan band against another. Often German commands formed or reconstructed specifically named bands, pseudo-gangs, or counter-bands, composed of Nazi security police and security service personnel, personnel from local police forces, and also nationalistic local inhabitants. They tasked these bands and gangs with the mission of making contact with and, if necessary, fighting against Soviet partisan formations and with assessing constantly the morale of the indigenous population.¹⁰⁸

The Germans moved some nationalistic formations that they employed as anti-guerrilla forces from one sector of the Soviet–German front to another. For example, 13 battalions – five Lithuanian, five Ukrainian, two Latvian, and one Polish – operated in German-occupied territory in Belorussia. In Belorussia alone, the combined strength of these national formations reached almost 60,000 men.¹⁰⁹

In October 1941 the Belorussian nationalists organised themselves into the ‘Belorussian People Self-Assistance Union’ (BPS). Subsequently, at least for a brief period, it became rather influential. Under the command of I. Ermachenko, a former officer in General A. Denikin’s White Army of the Russian Civil War period, it termed itself an organisation of the ‘enlightenment’. In June 1942 the BPS issued an appeal to the local population to create a ‘Free Corps of Self-Defence’, a combat organisation whose main mission was to fight against Communist partisans. Naturally, the Germans welcomed the nationalists’ appeal, since by that time Red partisan detachment activities had become more than just troublesome. Therefore, on 29 June 1942, a German general, Commissioner Wilhelm Kube, admitted the necessity of strengthening co-operation ‘between Nazi occupation authorities and the honest Belorussian population’.¹¹⁰ Almost a full year later, the German authorities finally acted on Kube’s recommendations. On 3 June 1943, Alfred Rosenberg, the Reichsminister for the East, issued a decree permitting private ownership of land by the peasants. This concession, however, appeared too late. Kube then set up an informal consultative body composed of the ‘most active and loyal’ individuals of his own choice to represent the Belorussian population. In the end, these delayed and belated measures and the creation of this supposedly representative organ had little influence on the population.

After the German security situation in Belorussia had significantly worsened, on 22 January 1944, the Germans permitted the Belorussian nationalists to form a Belorussian Central Rada [Parliament – *Belo-*

rusaskaia Tsentral'naia Rada] or BCR, headed by Astrousky. The Germans hoped that, through this organisation, it would be possible to co-ordinate the occupation authorities' efforts to establish the Nazi 'New Order' and conduct more effective operations against the Soviet Partisan Movement. The Rada accredited 'consultants' to various local German district commissioners [*Gebiets kommissaren*] and soon began to issue decrees in its own name.

In view of the anti-partisan operations, the BCR, which consisted of 14 members hand-picked by Astrousky and confirmed by the *General-kommissar*, announced the formation of armed combat units. These constituted a local Country Defence Corps (literally, District Defence) [*Krajeva abarona*], whose members wore the Belorussian white-red-white insignia on their military caps. To the Belorussian nationalists, this corps represented the embryo of a real Belorussian Army. However, to the nationalists' consternation, the Germans hesitated to recognise it as such.

According to Rada instructions, all members of the local male population up to the age of 57 were to enlist in defence corps units, including former officers of the Polish and Red armies. Although draft evasion was punishable by death, many persons evaded the enlistment campaign. At the same time, the German command delayed handing promised weaponry to members of Country Defence Corps units. The net affect was a rebound effect. Many potential enlistees simply joined Communist partisan detachments. In the final analysis, only a few Country Defence Corps units were actually dispatched to partisan regions to take part in real military operations.

In a desperate effort to win popular support, in early summer 1944, the BCR finally called for general elections. An elected 2nd Belorussian Convention, which represented 'all peoples of Belorussia irrespective of faith and creed', was to reaffirm the principles of Belorussian independence. On 7 June 1944, only weeks before the sounds of the advancing Red Army could be heard, 1,039 nationalist delegates (904 men and 135 women) gathered in Minsk. The assembly represented the cream of the Belorussian nationalist movement. However, three weeks later, on 29 June 1944, 300 cadets of the Belorussian Military School, which had been founded only two weeks before, marched along March 25 Avenue and left the Belorussian capital of Minsk. The remnants of the BCR fled with them toward Vilnius and exile.

When we examine the history of the Ukrainian nationalist movement and its activities in Nazi-occupied Ukraine, the year 1929 emerges as

most significant. In Germany that year, Ukrainian nationalists united to form the 'Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists' (OUN). The leader of this new union was E. Konovalets, a former officer in the Austro-Hungarian Army.¹¹¹ In 1931 Hitler met in person with Konovalets, and the meeting gave the OUN chief an opportunity to speak about the hordes of nationalists who would fight side by side with Hitler in his march to the East.¹¹² Those among the OUN whom the Germans considered as their most reliable partners were selected to attend special Nazi intelligence schools and centres in Munich, Danzig, and Berlin. The Germans then sent the graduates from these training centres to countries in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, the potential victims of Germany. When Poland fell to the Germans in 1939, the OUN's executive personnel were transferred to the Ukraine with the mission of activating special headquarters in L'vov and Volyn' and organising armed struggle against the Soviet regime in the western part of the Ukraine.¹¹³

Not long before the German attack on the Soviet Union, the OUN split into two factions because of competition for the leadership of the Ukrainian nationalist movement. The two factions were headed by A. Mel'nik and S. Bandera. The latter was a very influential Ukrainian nationalist leader, whose organisations and associated-armed groups were later termed '*Banderovtzy*', or 'Banderovites'. Two detachments formed by Bandera, named 'Rolland', and 'Nightingale', accompanied the forward units of the German Army when they crossed the USSR's state borders on 22 June 1941. The former was to operate in the city of Odessa, and the latter in the city of L'vov. Within a week of the German invasion, on 30 June 1941, the Ukrainian nationalists declared the German-occupied portion of the Ukraine to be an 'independent state', which would co-operate closely with Greater Germany. Many cities in the western Ukraine organised special festivals to commemorate the event.¹¹⁴

However, despite the nationalists' hopes and aspirations, the Germans restricted their activities in the occupied Soviet territories, particularly in the case of the Ukrainian nationalists. German authorities arrested their leaders, Bandera and Stetcko, and placed them under house arrest in Berlin.¹¹⁵ In spite of the house arrest, in August 1941 the latter managed to travel to the Polish city of Krakow to meet with newly appointed leaders of the OUN, in particular, a man named Lebed.¹¹⁶ In September 1941, the Germans finally permitted the nationalists to form a Ukrainian National Government in Kiev. The members of the new

Ukrainian Rada asked German authorities to support their efforts to organise a new nationalistic society named '*Prosvity*' [Rays of Hope], but the German response was distinctly negative. On 28 November 1941, the Germans disbanded the Ukrainian Rada, despite the fact that its members had taken oaths to follow the Nazis to the very end.¹¹⁷

One of most significant achievements of the Ukrainian nationalists was the formation of the SS Division 'Galicia' [*Galitchina*], which, in June 1944, the Germans committed into action against the Red Army forces in the Brody region of L'vov District. After being severely battered during the Soviet's L'vov-Sandomierz offensive operation in July 1944, the Germans transferred the '*Galitchina*' Division to Slovakia where it took active part in suppressing the popular uprising of the Slovak population (29 August–27 October 1944).¹¹⁸ Thereafter, the division conducted anti-partisan operations in Yugoslavia. In May 1945, the division's remnants surrendered to the British in Austria.

In addition to those organisations mentioned above, still other Ukrainian nationalist bands collaborated with the Nazis. Armed bands of Ukrainian nationalists named the 'Ukrainian People's Revolutionary Army' and the 'Ukrainian Insurrection Army' operated actively in the forests around the cities of Rovno and Volyn'. Although the leaders of these two organisations promised the local population that they would fight the Germans, in reality, adhering to the slogan that the Ukrainians' number one enemy was Moscow, they co-operated with the Germans in operations against the Soviet partisans. One of their largest scale anti-partisan operations was an attempt in the summer of 1943 to isolate numerous Soviet partisan detachments in the forested region of north-eastern Ukraine and southern Belorussia. The operation, however, had only limited success.

By late 1943 German intelligence realised that it would be very difficult to retain control over western Ukraine. Therefore, they reached a decision to rely on the underground activities of the Ukrainian nationalists after any German withdrawal from the country. After that time the Germans supplied nationalist bands with additional weaponry, demolition equipment, and radios. When the Red Army began pursuing German forces westward, nationalist partisans began diversionary activities in the Soviet rear area. They attacked individual vehicles and small groups of Red Army personnel, killed liaison officers, conducted reconnaissance, and supplied German headquarters with intelligence information.

In addition, during the war, the nationalists exploited the nationalistic

sentiments of various factions of the population in the occupied Soviet territories to form an actual ‘fifth column’ in Stalin’s administrative structure. Although many historians deny any ‘fifth column’ existed in the wartime Soviet Union, one must evaluate the nature, activities, and impact of General A. A. Vlasov’s ‘Russian Liberation Army’ (ROA). Many of this army’s members joined its ranks because they were nationalists, and they wanted to fight for their own goals in any way they could. But as W. Laqueur has correctly stated, many others fought against Stalin’s harsh rule and joined the ROA simply because they preferred to be fed and armed in any type of military organisation rather than be hungry or a casualty in a German concentration camp.¹¹⁹ Which of these sentiments prevailed is another subject that requires fresh objective research. Whichever sentiment prevailed, it is impossible to ignore the question of the role of nationalists as potential enemy agents operating in various Soviet governmental or military structures during the Second World War.

Nationalists and their sympathisers were not the only people who collaborated with the Nazi regime and took part in the struggle against Soviet partisans. Cossack formations too took an active part in German anti-partisan campaigns, not only in German-occupied territory but also in other Eastern European countries.¹²⁰ The most vivid example of this type of activity occurred in spring 1942, when Colonel General (*Generaloberst*) Rudolf Schmidt, the commander of the German Second Panzer Army, organised and activated a group of Russians commanded by Bronislav Kaminsky.¹²¹ This middle-aged former Soviet official organised a formidable brigade consisting of five or six battalions of 500 to 600 men each, which then operated in the area south of Briansk. General Schmidt authorised Kaminsky to act independently, to appoint local officials in his region, and to organise the region’s economy. Kaminsky first issued a proclamation abolishing the collective farm system. He then supervised the distribution of remaining farm implements and livestock among the local farmers and organised a local militia to protect the region against Soviet partisans.

These measures dramatically altered the situation in the Briansk region. By the summer of 1942, Soviet partisan units faced fierce resistance. The Germans themselves could not help but note the fact that the indigenous population had been pacified by Russians themselves, and at little cost in German resources. In 1943, when German forces retreated westward, Kaminsky’s forces retreated with them. Having lost their primary reason for fighting and knowing that there would be no pardon

by the Soviet authorities, in the long run Kaminsky's militia became a mere gang of bandits who plundered the population, indulged in drinking, quarrelled with the Germans and among themselves, and refused to fight. After being promoted to the rank of general, in late summer 1944, the Germans shot Kaminsky for displaying excessive cruelty to the local population while suppressing the Warsaw uprising.¹²²

Many authors have written about the so-called 'Vlasov [or in German, *Wlassoff*] Movement'.¹²³ Thousands of men, primarily former Soviet soldiers, joined Lieutenant-General A. A. Vlasov's 'Russian Liberation Army'.¹²⁴ Besides the purely military aims of using his army against the partisans and to pacify the population in occupied Soviet territories, Vlasov also harboured the idea of setting up such an organisation for propaganda purposes in order to wage psychological warfare against the Soviet Union. This is evident from his appeal to Russian soldiers in 1943, in particular those behind the German lines. In his highly emotional appeal, he declared:

I saw how hard the life of the Russian worker was, how the peasant was forced into the Kolkhoz [collective farm], how millions of Russian people disappeared, arrested without any investigation or trial. I saw everything Russian being trampled under foot, and sycophants being promoted to command posts in the Red Army, people who did not have the interests of the Russian people at heart. The system of command demoralised the Red Army. Irresponsible prying and denunciations made the commander a plaything in the hands of party bureaucrats.¹²⁵

Some Western sources claim that, from the time of his surrender in July 1942, Vlasov agreed to help Germany achieve a non-Bolshevik Russia. Further, they assert that the Nazis neglected to exploit Vlasov's worth as a powerful political instrument against Stalin's regime.¹²⁶ Practically speaking, however, the 'Vlasov Movement' and its military organisation, the ROA, was, as others assert, 'more symbolic than real'.¹²⁷ Moreover, whatever symbolism it expressed was in a military rather than a political sense. As Albert Seaton has concluded, the role of nationalism and the nationalists was greatly 'exaggerated'.¹²⁸

In summarising the activities and impact of the various nationalistic organisations and military units in Nazi-occupied Soviet territory, it would be correct to conclude that, in some regions, they were numerous and had considerable influence on the behaviour of the indigenous population. Although some high-ranking Nazi officials, concluded, as

did General Alfred Jodl, that such formations were unreliable and could function only during periods of German success, they often posed a serious menace to Soviet partisans.

NOTES

1. Quoted in Treadgold, *Twentieth Century Russia*, p. 342.
2. *Sovershenno sekretno*, pp. 177–8.
3. Laqueur, *Guerrilla*, p. 236.
4. Lacqueur, *Stalin: The Glasnost Revelations*, p. 32.
5. As quoted in Osanka, *Modern Guerrilla Warfare*, p. 113.
6. A. Rhodes, *Propaganda. The Art of Persuasion: World War II* (London: Angus & Robertson, 1976), p. 224.
7. Asprey, *War in the Shadow*, p. 496.
8. Treadgold, *Twentieth Century Russia*, p. 345.
9. Quoted in Armstrong, *Soviet Partisans*, pp. 357–8.
10. *Sbornik soobshchenii chrezvychainoi gosudarstvennoi komissii o zlodeiianiakh nemetsko-fashistskikh zakhvatchikov* [Collection of reports by the Extraordinary State Commission on the crimes of the German-Fascist usurpers] (Moscow: Politizdat, 1946), p. 7. Hereafter cited as *Sbornik soobshchenii*.
11. Dallin, *German Rule in Russia*, p. 74.
12. Dmytryshyn, *A History of Russia*, p. 559.
13. N. Herr, *Politics and History in the Soviet Union* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 22.
14. Quoted in G. Fischer, *Soviet Opposition to Stalin* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1952), p. 9.
15. Laqueur, *Guerrilla*, p. 208.
16. Werth, *Russia at War*, p. 712.
17. G. Reitlinger, *The House Built on Sand: The Conflicts of German Policy in Russia, 1939–1945* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1960), p. 229.
18. G. Lyons (ed.), *The Russian Version of the Second World War* (London: Leo Cooper, 1976), p. xvi.
19. Hosking, *First Socialist Society*, p. 261.
20. G. Ciano, *Ciano's Diplomatic Papers*, ed. M. Muggeridge (London: Odhams Press, 1948), pp. 464–5.
21. *Nemetsko-fashistskii okkupatsionnyi regime (1941–1944 g.g.)* [The German-fascist occupation regime (1941–1945)] (Moscow: Politizdat, 1965), p. 23.
22. *Sbornik soobshchenii*, pp. 168, 172–3.
23. As quoted in Shirer, *Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, pp. 937–8.
24. *Sudebnyi protsess po delu o zlodeiianiakh Nemetsko-fashistskikh zakhvatchikov na territorii Latvii, Litovskoi i Estonskoi SSR* [The legal process in the matter of the crimes of the German-fascist usurpers on the territory of

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- the Latvian, Lithuanian, and Estonian Soviet Socialist Republics] (Riga, 1946), p. 115.
25. Ellis, *Short History of Guerrilla Warfare*, pp. 148–9.
 26. *Ibid.*, p. 149.
 27. *Prestupnye tseli – prestupnye sredstva*, pp. 108–12.
 28. *SES*, p. 97.
 29. *Sovetskaiia Belarus*, 27 April 1963.
 30. Il. Ehrenburg, 'The Fate of Europe', in *The Liberation of Europe* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1989), p. 16.
 31. *Prestupnye tseli – prestupnye sredstva*, p. 155.
 32. *Ibid.*, pp. 168–9.
 33. *Nurembergskii protsess* [The Nuremberg process], v 3-hk tomakh [in 3 volumes], tom 3 (Moscow: Uredicheskaiia literatura, 1965), p. 114.
 34. Werth, *Russia at War*, pp. 211–12.
 35. *Prestupleniia nemetsko-fashistikh zakhvatchikov v Belarussii, 1941–1944* [The crimes of the German-Fascist usurpers in Belorussia, 1941–1944] (Minsk: Belarus, 1965), p. 23.
 36. *Pravda*, 24 March 1969.
 37. Laqueur, *Stalin: The Glasnost Revelations*, p. 217.
 38. *Prestupnye tseli – prestupnye sredstva*, p. 174.
 39. M. Zagorulko and A. Udenkov, *Krakh ekonomicheskikh planov fashistskoi Germanii na vremennno okkupirovannoi territorii SSSR* [The disruption of Fascist-German economic plans at the time of occupation of USSR territory] (Moscow: Ekonomika, 1970), p. 42.
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 41. L. Kotov, 'V tylu gruppy armii tsentr' [In the rear of Army Group Centre], in *Geroi podpoliia*, vypusk 2 (Moscow: 'Nauka', 1972), p. 4.
 42. *Sbornik soobshchenii*, p. 14.
 43. V. Samuchin, *Volkhovskie partizany* [The Volkhov partisans] (Leningrad, 1969), pp. 98–9.
 44. Quoted in Armstrong, *Soviet Partisans*, p. 691 (Appendix Document 16).
 45. Shirer, *Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, p. 941.
 46. *Pravda ukrainy*, 19 and 21 January 1946.
 47. *Nurembergskii protsess nad glavnymi nemetskimi voennymi prestupnikami: Sbornik materialov* [The Nuremberg process over main German military crimes: A collection of materials] v 7-i tomakh [in 7 volumes], tom 3 (Moscow: Uredicheskaiia literature, 1958), p. 361.
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58. *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1960), pp. 562–3.
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63. As quoted in *ibid.*, p. 854.
64. N. Tolstoy, *Victims of Yalta* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1978), p. 23.
65. Drum, *Air Power*, pp. 53, 25.
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81. *VES*, p. 540.
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98. Treadgold, *Twentieth Century Russia*, p. 343.
99. E. Coido, 'Guerrilla Warfare in the Ukraine', in Osanka, *Modern Guerrilla Warfare*, p. 114.
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111. M. Terlitsa, *Natsionalistichnyy skorpion* [The nationalist scorpions] (Kiev, 1963), p. 14.
112. M. Terlitsa, *Pravnyky pogani. Ukrainski natsionalisty v Kanadi* [The wrong grandchildren: Ukrainian nationalists in Canada] (Kiev, 1960), p. 103.
113. 'Sovetskie organy gosudarstvennoi bezopasnosti v gody voyny' [Soviet state-security organs in the war years], *VI*, No. 5 (May 1965), p. 22.
114. M. Terlitsa, *Natsionalistichnyy skorpion*, p. 49.
115. *Voyna v tylu vraga*, vypusk 1, p. 409.
116. J. Armstrong, *Ukrainian Nationalism* (New York, London: Columbia University Press, 1963), p. 83.
117. *Post imeni Iaroslava Golana* [Observations in the name of Iaroslav Golan] (L'vov, 1967), p. 48.
118. *SES*, p. 1224.
119. Laqueur, *Stalin*, p. 131.
120. R. Bailey, *The Partisans and Guerrillas* (Alexandria, VA: Time-Life Books, 1978), p. 120.
121. Asprey, *War in the Shadows*, p. 496.
122. G. Bruce, *Harbottle's Dictionary of Battles* (London: Granada, 1979), p. 272; Cooper, *The Phantom War*, p. 113; D. Mountfield, *The Partisans* (London: Hamlyn, 1979), p. 181.
123. A. A. Vlasov was a lieutenant-general in the Red Army. In June 1942 he gave himself up to the Nazis. Later that year he headed the pro-Nazi Committee for the Liberation of the Peoples of Russia, on whose behalf the creation of the 'Russian Army' was proclaimed in 1943. At the end of the war, Vlasov was captured by Soviet troops and was later sentenced to death by hanging (1946) by the Military Board of the USSR Court. The verdict was carried out on 1 August 1946.
124. *SES*, p. 229.
125. Quoted in Hosking, *First Socialist Society*, p. 290.
126. MacKenzie and Curran, *History of Russia and the Soviet Union*, p. 562.
127. A. Dallin, R. Mavrogordatao, 'Rodionov: A Case Study in Wartime Redefection', *American Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. XVIII, No. 1 (1959), p. 25.
128. A. Seaton, *The Russo-German War*, p. 97.

PART II

COMBAT ACTIVITIES OF THE SOVIET PARTISAN

Combat Activities of the Soviet Partisan

The Soviet–German War, which Russian literature has officially named the Great Patriotic War of 1941–45, was an integral part of the Second World War. This fighting between German and Russian forces was a ferocious conflict on a scale unprecedented in the annals of human history. Many Western historians also refer to it as the Great Fatherland War of the Soviet Union, a name that is closer still to a strict English translation of the Russian '*Velikaia Otechestvennaia voina*'.¹

Some Western historians have argued that Stalin introduced the term 'Great Patriotic War' because he recognised the disloyalty of much of the Soviet Union's population to Soviet ideology. Consequently, they argue, during the war Stalin emphasised defence of the sacred Motherland rather than the Soviet Union or Communism.² While there is some validity to this argument, the real truth is far simpler. In reality, the Soviets adopted the term Great Patriotic War for clear and impelling historical reasons. The most unforgettable period in modern Russian history occurred in the early nineteenth century, when Russian forces emerged victorious in the 1812 war against Napoleon. Because Russia performed the unprecedented feat of defeating Napoleon and later led the liberation of Europe from French dominance, Russians henceforth called its victory the Patriotic War of 1812. Since the German threat in 1941, both to the Soviet Union and the remainder of Europe, was far more severe than that posed by Napoleon more than a century before, it was altogether appropriate for the Russians to call the new conflict the Great Patriotic War.

Since 1953 Soviet historians have subdivided The Great Patriotic War of 1941–45 into three distinct periods (prior to 1953 they had divided it into four periods). The first period dated from the commencement of the German invasion on 22 June 1941 until 18 November 1942, which

marked the end of the Soviet defensive operation at Stalingrad. Military specialists term the first few months of this period as the ‘initial period of war.’ The most significant operations and battles during the first period of war took place along the north-western (Leningrad), western (Moscow), and south-western (the Ukraine) axes, or in Russian, directions [*napravleniia*]. These included the Battle for Smolensk (July–August 1941), the Kiev, Odessa, and Sevastopol’ Defensive Operations, and the Battle for Moscow. The titanic struggle for Moscow took place in two stages: the defensive battle (from 1 October through November 1941), and the Soviet counteroffensive (from 5 December 1941 to early April 1942).

The second period began on 19 November 1942, when the Red Army commenced a counteroffensive operation that encircled and destroyed German forces in the Stalingrad region, and ended on 31 December 1943. This period included the critical Stalingrad encirclement and the subsequent destruction of 330,000 German soldiers (91,000 German officers and men and 24 German generals surrendered on 2 February 1943), the breaking of the German siege of Leningrad (January 1943), the Battle of Kursk (7 July to 23 August 1943), the advance of Soviet forces to the Dnepr River (September–October 1943), and Soviet seizure of bridgeheads over the Dnepr River in the Ukraine.

The third period lasted from January 1944 to the surrender of Nazi Germany on 8 May 1945. This period encompassed the liberation of the Right Bank of the Ukraine (December 1943 to April 1944), the defeat of German forces at Leningrad and Novgorod (January to March 1944), Soviet liberation of the Crimea Peninsula (8 April to 12 May 1944), operations to clear German forces from Belorussia, Poland, and south-eastern Europe, and the Battle for Berlin (16 April to 8 May 1945). Soviet historiography treats the August 1945 struggle against the Japanese in the Far East in August 1945 as a separate phase of the Great Patriotic War.³

Within this framework, Russian historians believe that guerrilla war conducted by Soviet partisans contributed significantly to Soviet victory in its Great Patriotic War. They did so primarily by disrupting German communications systems, collecting intelligence for the Red Army, and conducting raids on enemy rear area installations in German-occupied territories. While Soviet and Russian historians have tended to overestimate partisan contributions to Soviet victory, many Western historians have questioned the seriousness of those contributions.

Partisan activity and the efficiency the Soviet partisan movement

certainly varied during different stages of the war since the concrete situation on the Soviet–German front varied, as did the strength of the movement and the missions assigned to it. For example, the partisans' role during the Red Army's strategic defence in the summer and autumn of 1942 differed significantly from its role during the 1943 Battle of Kursk, when Soviet groups of *fronts* launched large-scale offensive operations. Partisan strength and organisation also varied in accordance with such factors as the general situation at the front, the morale of the local population in occupied Soviet territories, and the capability of the Soviet defence industry to provide them weapons, ammunition, radio stations, and high explosives. It also depended on German capabilities for conducting anti-partisan operations and other lesser factors. Finally, the missions that the Soviet High Command (Stavka) assigned its partisan movement also varied throughout the war.

After the Soviet victory in the Battle for Moscow, the Soviet High Command attempted to introduce strict military organisation in the entire partisan movement. To do so, it sent regular army officers to serve as instructors, advisers, and members of the commands and staffs of partisan forces. Partisan forces grew in strength as a steady flow of NKVD and Party representatives worked in the countryside to recruit new guerrilla formations. Growing confidence in Soviet power, as well as fear on the part of the local population that inevitable retribution would accompany the return of the Red Army, played a significant role in the dramatic increase in partisan power.

During the initial period of the war, the period of spectacular Soviet defeats came to an end in late 1941 when the Soviets drove German Army Group Centre back from Moscow. The resulting rebound in popular morale was reflected by a marked increase in partisan activity. The Soviet High command sent a growing stream of radiomen, specialists (mainly in mining and demolition), staff officers, and political and intelligence agents to partisan formations either through gaps in the front lines, like the '*Surazhskie vorota*' [the 'Surazh Gates'] into Belorussia, or by air. The High Command determined a hierarchy of missions that partisan forces were to perform. These missions sought to disrupt German resupply systems and harass German combat forces and generally contribute to the success of Red Army regular force operations.⁴

During 1943 and 1944, the primary function of Soviet partisan forces was to disrupt enemy communications lines and conduct reconnaissance and intelligence collection. These partisan actions reached their apogee

THE SOVIET PARTISAN MOVEMENT, 1941–1944

during operation 'Bagration' in the summer of 1944, a large-scale offensive by four Soviet *fronts* against German Army Group Centre in Belorussia. Stalin code-named the operation 'Bagration' as a tribute to the military hero of the 1812 war against Napoleon, General P. I. Bagration. During the immense operation, which historians have cited as the most vivid example of successful partisan warfare, partisans attacked retreating German columns, seized tactically important railroad bridges, and carried out a wide range of other types of operations.

NOTES

1. Laqueur, *Stalin: The Glasnost Revelations*, pp. 213, 214.
2. Cooper, *The Phantom War*, p. 20.
3. *Velikaia Otechestvennaia Narodnaia 1941–1945* [Great Patriotic People, 1941–1945] (Moscow: 'Mysl', 1985), pp. 5–23 (hereafter cited as *VON*); *VES*, pp. 116–20.
4. *50 let*, p. 298.

The Soviet Partisan Movement during the First Period of the Soviet–German War (June 1941–November 1942)

It goes without saying that the most important characteristic of the first period of war was the failure of German forces to destroy the Red Army. Second, because of this failure, the fledgling partisan movement was able to begin assisting regular Red Army forces. They did so by attempting to disrupt enemy communication lines, chiefly railway communication, by conducting reconnaissance, by sabotaging the German attempts to exploit economically the occupied territories, and, last but not least, by providing political leadership and organisation to millions of people living in the enemy rear. All of these functions were interrelated, and their fulfilment depended on many factors and varied from sector to sector of the Soviet–German front.

The partisan movement's efficiency during this period has been and remains a subject of great controversy among historians in both Russia and the West. Often since the war's end, authors have reached diametrically opposed conclusions. Most Soviet and Russian historians, for example, have emphasised the efficiency and impact of partisan combat operations. German authors too, including many former German generals who commanded combat and security forces at every level of command, praised the high efficiency of the Soviet Partisan Movement. These include G. Heran, Joachim Fest, Walter Görlitz, and Marshal Erich von E. Manstein.¹ In addition, E. Hesse wrote a specialised monograph on Soviet partisan warfare in which he stressed the impressive combat performance of Soviet partisans during the Second World War.² After the war the Historical Division of the US Air Force's Research Studies Institute invited German Air Force General Karl Drum to share with its specialists his experiences with Soviet partisan warfare. As a

three-star general or ‘General der Flieger’ in 1941–42, General Drum had served as the chief of Army Group South’s Air Support Command. He ended his assessment by stating:

The preceding description of Russian partisan warfare against the German invaders indicates that this type of warfare inflicted heavy damage, both in personnel and material, on the German Armed Forces. It also tied down strong forces that had to be denied to the front-line fighting proper. Partisan warfare may have contributed considerably to the German defeat.³

Another group of German officers collectively prepared an entire series of special reports on the Second World War for the United States Army. In this 24-volume series, they concluded that the Wehrmacht confronted significant partisan resistance as early as the very first days of the Russian campaign.⁴

Subsequently, many Western historians have exploited source materials from captured German and Soviet documents to reconstruct the nature and scale of Soviet partisan warfare on the German Eastern front. In essence, these documents have become the single most valuable source of information on Soviet partisan war and the basis for most post-war books and articles on the subject. The most formidable of these works was the product of a vast research project undertaken jointly in 1951 by the US Air Force’s Human Resources Research Institute and co-operating Army, Navy, and Department of State agencies. Code-named ‘Project Alexander’ and conducted as an integral part of the official War Documentation Project, this research project produced a series of studies on Soviet partisan war in the Second World War.⁵ The most important book resulting from this research was a collective monograph entitled *Soviet Partisans in World War II*, which was edited by J. Armstrong and published in 1964 by the University of Wisconsin Press. This voluminous (793-page) work is the most detailed and systematic investigation of the Soviet wartime partisan movement in 1941–44 to have been published in the West.

Another valuable repository of source materials on Soviet partisan war is a large number of manuscripts, essentially debriefings, prepared by German officers after war’s end. These manuscripts, which cover almost every aspect of German–Russian military operations, including partisan fighting, are housed in the US Army Military History Institute at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, and are available for use by military historians and the general public.⁶

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In 1956, a former US Army officer, Major E. Howell, published a volume entitled *The Soviet Partisan Movement 1941–1944*, which he also prepared on the basis of thorough examination of captured German documents.⁷ This collection of captured materials includes many directives, strength reports, situation reports, war diaries, personal diaries, minutes of meetings, and aerial photographs which the US and British Armies captured from the Germans. Private collections of documents donated by many German wartime officers and authors later augmented this source material. In fact, without this critical information, no accurate history of the Soviet Partisan Movement could be written.

These extensive document collections served more practical purposes. During the 1950s and 1960s, within the context of the Cold War, American historians and official political and military analysts viewed these documents as authoritative sources of practical information vital to the preparation of sound analyses of Soviet partisan warfare and its relationship to US foreign policy. In March 1962 the Historical Division of the US Air Force's Research Studies Institute evaluated the wartime efficiency of Soviet guerrillas, concluding:

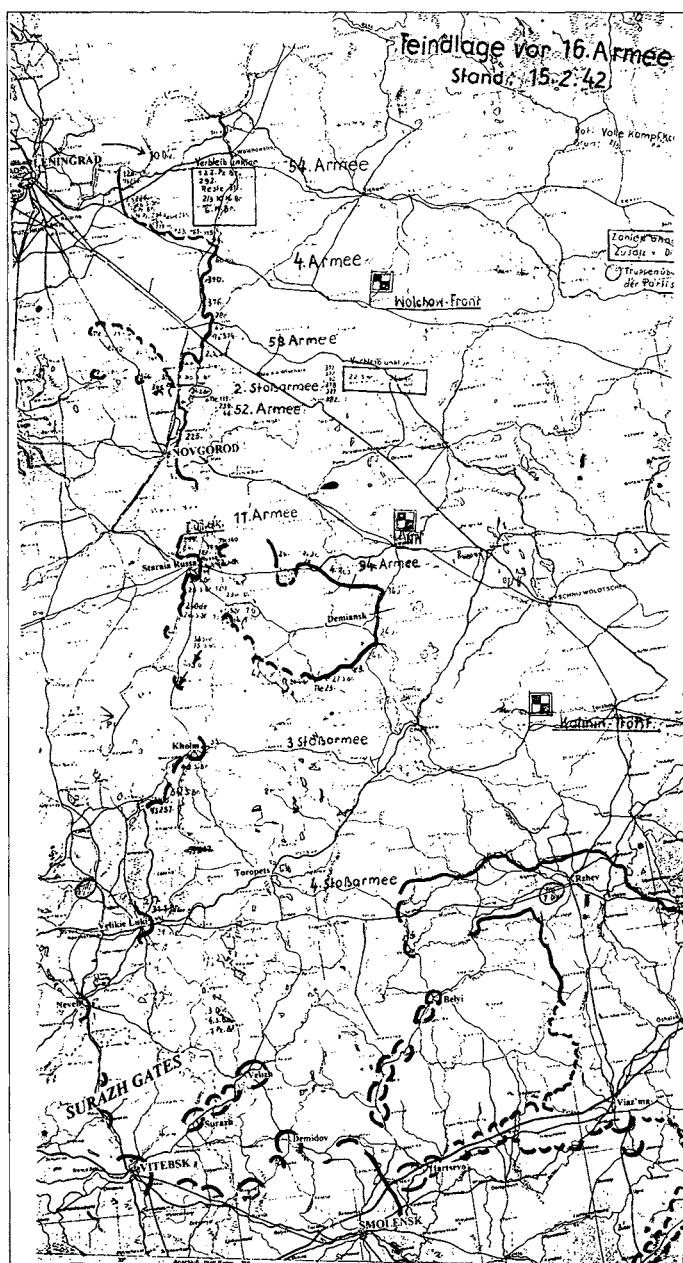
One of the lessons of the German-Russian struggle lies in the serious contribution made by Russian partisan forces to the defeat of the German Army. Today, in preparing its defence, the Western World can scarcely afford to ignore a factor which has been so successfully employed by Stalin in Russia during World War II . . . Nor should the partisans as an intelligence gathering agency be overlooked. Indeed, this seems to have been one of the major contributions made by the partisans to the Russian war effort, giving the Soviet High Command invaluable information not only on weak points, gaps, and hinges between units in the German lines, but on German operational plans as well.⁸

The prominent British military theorist and historian J. F. C. Fuller also studied the Soviet partisan war and concluded:

The partisans, whose numbers were always increasing, sowed fear in the hearts of the German soldiers, who were scattered along the endless railways. In the immense spaces which these crossed, the partisan detachments played the same role as did the submarine packs in the Atlantic – packs which, it should be remembered, nearly brought the economic demise of Great Britain.⁹

Later, however, many Western analysts detected a more sinister aspect

THE SOVIET PARTISAN MOVEMENT, 1941-1944



Map 1: The Soviet-German front in the northern sector on 15 February 1942 and the 'Surazh Gates'

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of partisan activity that tended to undermine their military efficiency. Disagreeing with their earlier counterparts, these analysts concluded that the principal task the Communist Party assigned to the partisans was not to conduct combat operations. Instead, the Party required them to perform an essentially political function, specifically forcing the population in the occupied territories to adhere to the Communist regime. Most of these analysts simply did not believe German and Soviet reports on partisan and anti-partisan military actions and thought that the information in these reports about Soviet partisan operations was exaggerated. Further, they concluded partisan weaponry and command and control was very poor, and, as a result, it would have been impossible to inflict significant losses on the enemy. Obviously, in retrospect, many of these more recent criticisms are correct. It is important, however, to test their validity against newly available source materials to determine to what extent these perceived shortcomings actually reduced the combat capabilities of the partisan movement.

THE PARTISAN MOVEMENT THROUGH DECEMBER 1941

Official Soviet and Russian sources have consistently maintained that Soviet partisans achieved substantial results and provided significant assistance to the Red Army. The 12-volume Soviet *History of the Second World War*, published during the 1970s and early 1980s, represented the most thorough and complete investigation of the war on the Soviet-German front for its time. It claimed that, by the end of November 1941, at a time when the Germans were strenuously attempting to reach Moscow, partisan activities forced the Germans to employ 300,000 troops for security purposes in occupied Soviet territory.¹⁰ Of course, this enormous figure cannot be accepted without serious reservation. First, the authors of the *History of the Second World War* included in this number so-called 'other formations' in addition to regular German security forces. Many of the latter were only local police formed primarily from those collaborating with German authorities. Furthermore, in 1941 the German Army seldom employed regular Wehrmacht combat units for security tasks. Therefore, the bulk of security forces were likely proper security formations such as security [*sicherheit*] divisions, regiments, battalions, and companies.

Western sources provide some indication of the actual quantity and strength of German security forces. For example, Heilbrunn's work provides some interesting estimates based upon captured German docu-

ments. He argues that, in each sector, roughly equivalent numbers of German security forces and Soviet partisans confronted one another.¹¹ J. Armstrong's massive study supports this contention by analysing the comparative strengths of German security forces and partisans later in the war.¹² According to Armstrong, even after the partisan movement had grown significantly, German Army Group North employed a total of about 30,000 security forces in its rear area to deal with the approximately 25,000–30,000 partisans in the region. Army Group North's security forces consisted of a total of 16 security battalions (German and other) of about 400 men each, 135 German and 22 other companies of 120 men each, and 87 other units, mostly German, of about 50 men each.¹³ Thus, the number of partisans and security forces were roughly equivalent.

Therefore, if official Soviet accounts of the numerical strength of the Soviet Partisan Movement at the end of 1941 are correct, and they actually constituted 90,000 fighters, then the strength of German security units that fought against them should have been about the same number.¹⁴ Other German sources indicate the number of security forces was actually 100,000 men.¹⁵ Thus, the Soviet official figure of 300,000 is questionable and a probable exaggeration. Regardless of which is correct, even the lower figure is a sizeable force.

Based upon an analysis of Soviet partisan activities throughout the entire war, the year 1941 was the most critical period. That is why so many authors have questioned partisan efficiency during this period. For example, Cooper quite correctly wrote, 'They [the Soviet partisans] began their operations in July 1941, but these were as a drop in the ocean and could do little to offset the lack of equipment, the poor training and the inadequate leadership under which the hastily-formed units laboured.'¹⁶ A British historian, who shared this opinion, elaborated:

The partisan war behind the German lines has been the subject of much romantic and propagandist mythology. During the first months after the invasion there was little spontaneous anti-German movement in the conquered zone. Large bands of Red Army soldiers cut off from their units lived in the forests of White Russia and pillaged anyone they could. Such life was evidently preferable to the treatment they would have received rejoining their units.¹⁷

In addition, when analysing partisan activities in various sectors of the Soviet–German front, Cooper noted that in December 1941 only one case of rail sabotage was reported in German Army Group North's rear

area.¹⁸ While the number of partisan raids and sabotage actions certainly varied from sector to sector, even in 1941, it is difficult to agree with these judgements that partisan actions amounted only to 'drops in the ocean' or 'pin pricks'. Closer analysis indicates why.

By exploiting German combat reports, General K. Drum demonstrated that partisans were active from the very first days of the German invasion. He described one such incident:

On the first day of the offensive against Russia, 22 June 1941, a partisan group appeared in the rear of advancing German forces in Lithuania. The spearhead division of the German V Corps invaded Russia from the area east and north-east of the pre-war Polish city of Suwalki, which had been occupied by the Germans after the Polish campaign. The division broke through the Russian border position, and by evening German elements formed a bridgehead across the Niemen River (15 miles south of Alytus), near Kristoniai. Suddenly, armed civilians appeared to the rear, at the village of Seirijai – six miles west of the bridgehead – ambushed a German bridge column, and fired from houses in the village on passing German troops. A reinforced regiment had to be committed against this partisan group that was apparently hiding in a forest near Seirijai. It took an entire day to flush the forest, and even so the 400 to 500 men belonging to the unit were not completely annihilated since some 25 per cent escaped. After the fighting was over, the Germans found that while the majority of the force consisted of Russian civilians of the upper class who had settled in the area after the USSR had occupied Lithuania, the nucleus of the force was formed by Russian soldiers who had been cut off by the German breakthrough and had put on civilian clothes.¹⁹

Cautiously evaluating the formative period of the Soviet Partisan Movement, Howell described initial partisan activities and indicated that, during the period 22 June to 16 September 1941, the partisans carried out 250 rail demolitions and destroyed 447 bridges just in the rear area of German Army Group Centre.²⁰ Alan Clark added that, from July to August 1941, the Germans had serious problems with partisan activities along their communications routes and with bypassed groups of Red Army soldiers.²¹ Other authors have persuasively argued that partisan activities were not particularly effective in 1941. The eminent historian Ziemke penned the following negative judgement:

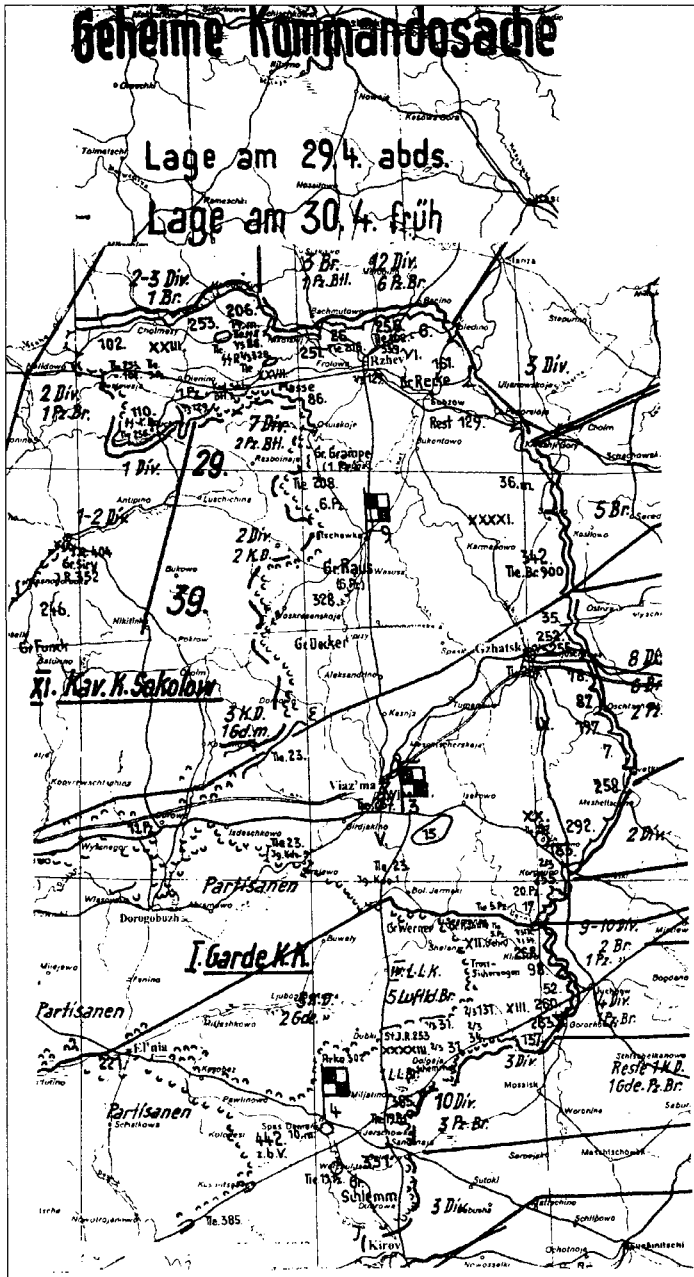
Those partisan units that did appear were small, ineffective, usually isolated, and in constant danger of disintegrating. Communist Party and NKVD [secret police] attempts to leave behind a network of Party and partisan groups had failed because of lack of time and because the local Party authorities, on whom the burden of the work fell, either had no clear concept of what was required or lacked enthusiasm for underground activity. It was clear that, contrary to propaganda claims, neither the masses, nor the Party elite would voluntarily spring to the defence of the Soviet system in a time of crisis.²²

It is true that the summer and autumn of 1941 was a very difficult period for the Soviet partisans. 1941 was a critical year in the formation of the partisan movement during which the Party and High Command were working out combat methods, unit organisational structures, and vital chains of command. Central bodies did not exist to co-ordinate the actions of various partisan detachments and groups under any semblance of a concrete plan. The partisans lacked reliable communications (primarily radio) both with higher echelons and with each other. Often partisan groups operating in the same region could not co-operate with one another or plan and conduct joint actions. Some official Soviet sources made no attempt to conceal these difficulties and associated errors on the part of the partisan movement itself in 1941. For example, the *History of the Second World War* criticises partisans in the Kursk region of the Russian Republic for their lack of activity [*aktivnost'*] during the critical month of November 1941. It noted that of 32 partisan detachments that were located in that area, only five or six were active.²³

Overall, this source claims that, by the end of 1941, the number of partisan detachments and groups operating in the enemy rear reached almost 2,000 and included about 90,000 partisan fighters.²⁴ This estimate is considerably lower than the official Soviet views of the 1950s and 1960s. For example, the officially sanctioned history of the Red Army, entitled *50 let vooruzhennikh sil SSSR* [50 Years of the Soviet Armed Forces], which was published in 1968, asserted that the number of partisan detachments operating at the end of 1941 was 3,500 rather than the 2,000 estimated by later Soviet sources.

Genuine confusion exists concerning the numerical strength of the Soviet Partisan Movement before and during the Battle for Moscow. One reputable British source claims that partisan ranks numbered only 10,000 fighters during the Battle for Moscow.²⁵ Harrison Salisbury, the

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Map 2: Soviet partisans with Group Below, 30 April 1942 (a German assessment)

former US correspondent in Moscow during the war, cited the same figure.²⁶ On the other hand, Laqueur places the partisan strength by the end of 1941 at 30,000 men.²⁷

Regrettably, most authors do not indicate whether this partisan force was operating only in German Army Group Centre's sector (the Moscow axis) or along the entire front, much of which was quiet. This omission severely diminishes the significance of either figure. Yet another author captures the essence of the dilemma, stating, 'It is impossible to say how many partisans were actively engaged during the first six months of what in the Soviet Union is known as the Great Patriotic War. It is only clear that they were more active than the Germans asserted but less active than the Soviet authorities maintained'.²⁸

Leaving the issue of numbers for further research to determine, the principal activity of Soviet partisans during the first period of the war was sabotage of enemy rail traffic and equipment, disruption of German maintenance and repair work, destruction of locomotives and bridges, attacks on German lines of communication, raids on German headquarters, individual soldiers, and small units, poisoning of wells, demolition of supply dumps, and terrorist acts against Nazi collaborators. A good example was the partisan attack on the German railway depot in the Belorussian town of Orsha. In addition, in the winter of 1941–42, the partisans engaged extensively in the preparation of landing fields for supply aircraft and Soviet airborne troops, most notably in the region south-west of Viaz'ma and near Demiansk. During the winter of 1941–42, the Soviet High Command launched large-scale airborne operations whose participants co-operated extensively with partisans operating in the rear areas of the German Army Groups Centre and North.

In general, the partisans made significant contributions to the war effort in the summer and autumn of 1941. The number of underground Party leaders and rank and file who received the highest national decoration, the Hero of the Soviet Union, evidences the fact that the Soviet High Command appreciated these actions. These included T. Bumazhkov, M. Gurianov, I. Kuzin, F. Poplavsky, A. Petrov and others who received their orders in 1941.²⁹ The High Command issued other underground and partisan members with a host of other decorations.

Soviet sources indicate that 20,000 partisans operated in the rear of the German Army Group North in 1941.³⁰ This figure closely approximates to the figure in the German report cited by Heilbrunn as 'the best available source'.³¹ As early as 19 July 1941, the commander of German

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Army Group North's 16th Army issued a special order concerning anti-partisan operations in his army's sector.³² On 11 November 1941, Field Marshal Wilhelm Ritter von Leeb, the commander of Army Group North, stated that, due to the danger of partisan activity, main communications between the cities of Pskov and Gdov should be organised along the Pskov, Maglogostitzi, Yamm, Gdov road instead of along the Novocelie, Strugi, Krasnye road.³³ Further, in this instance, increased partisan activity forced von Leeb to cancel a planned trip to his front-line units.³⁴

EQUIPPING AND SUPPLYING THE PARTISANS

One of the most acute problems partisan formations faced was the procurement of necessary weapons and ammunition. In 1941 their supply of armaments from the rear was woefully insufficient, and this forced partisan units to collect arms and ammunition primarily from the battlefield. Ironically, the large-scale defeat of Soviet forces in the initial period of war benefited the partisans by strewing immense quantities of military hardware and supplies across the Soviet countryside. Owing to their precipitous advance, the Germans could not recover or destroy this material. Thus, simply by scavenging, partisan units equipped themselves with small arms and even heavy weaponry (in several instances even tanks) recovered from the battlefields.

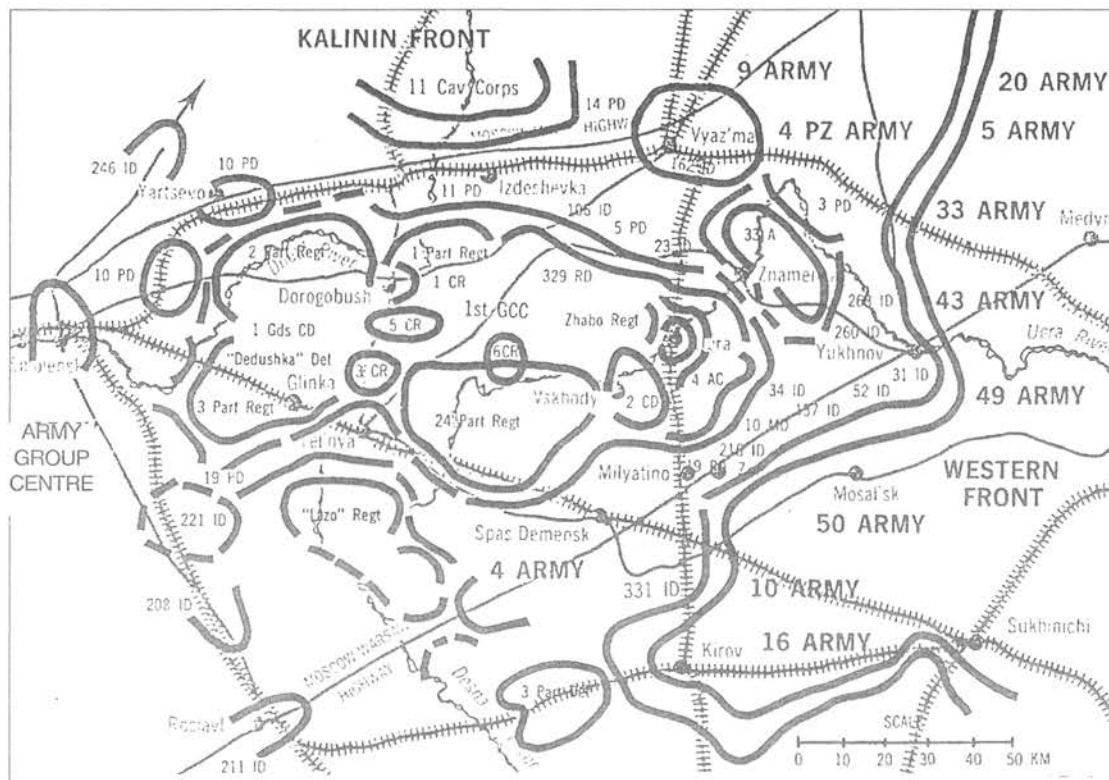
The weapons and ammunition stockpiles designated for use in peacetime pre-military training at Soviet secondary or vocational schools and centres were another lucrative source of supply for the partisans. Pre-military training centres were distributed all across the face of the pre-war Soviet Union, and, collectively, they possessed numerous small and well-hidden supply dumps. Finally, during their withdrawal, regular Red Army forces often left behind hidden weapons, ammunition, and equipment caches for guerrilla use. Occasionally, when the Germans forced them to leave one region and relocate to another, the partisans themselves hid some of their weapons, ammunition, and, in fact, any other equipment they could not transport, with the full intent to use these items when they returned. Often, however, the Germans discovered these hidden depots, which contained substantial quantities of arms and ammunition.

Of particular value to the partisans were thousands of land mines that Soviet sappers [combat engineers] had laid before and during the war.

The rapidly advancing Germans either missed them or lacked the time necessary to disarm them. Since they often knew from Red Army soldiers where these mines were located, partisans removed them and employed them in their operations. In addition, partisans improvised and created new mines from old, worn out ones or from duds. In his memoirs, R. Machul'sky, a veteran Belorussian partisan, recalled that partisan groups operating in the Minsk region smelted 400 tons of high explosive from captured aviation bombs and used it for demolition purposes.³⁵

Often the local population assisted the partisans by providing them with weapons they managed to collect on the battlefield. The Ukrainian State Archives contain a very interesting document showing how a family from the village of Denisovka in the Suzemsky region of Briansk District, assisted the local partisans. There, presumably over an extended length of time, a local peasant named Krilenko gathered, concealed, and later turned over to the partisans a staggering amount of equipment. The report indicated this included four heavy and eight light machine guns, four mortars, 160 rifles, 800 boxes of ammunition, 575 shells, 459 boxes of mortar rounds, 500 kilograms of high explosive, and 25 boxes of hand grenades.³⁶ In addition, his 13-year-old son Vasilii turned over two heavy machine guns, 54 rifles, 200 kilograms of high explosives, 50 boxes of ammunition, and 25 boxes of mortar rounds.³⁷ A well-known Belorussian historian who specialised in the partisan movement recalled a similar episode that occurred in Belorussia. In this case, Genia and Semen Durscky, two brothers from the village of Bereznitsa in the Ruzhansk region of Brest District, provided local guerrillas with 240 rifles and 14 machine guns they had collected on the battlefield.³⁸ Although such lucky cases seem even unreal and occurred very rarely, they occurred nevertheless.

Another instance, which occurred in 1941, was far more typical. In this case, a former collective farmer named Oguretsky from the village of Belyany in Osveisky region of Vitebsk District liberated a machine gun from a deserted trench. Later on, in the autumn he joined a local partisan detachment with his own heavy weapon.³⁹ A report prepared by the 227th Klichev Partisan Regiment operating in Belorussia summed up the essence of the weapons collection effort. In it, the regiment reported to higher headquarters, 'At first, weapons and ammunition were procured through the local population – [and] from rivers and pits, which had been abandoned and buried by Red Army units'.⁴⁰ Often the Germans severely punished those elements of the population that



Map 3: Territory occupied by Group Belov and partisan formations, March–April 1942

obtained weapons for the partisans. For example, Macksey described a very peculiar episode that occurred in October 1941 in the north-western sector of the Soviet–German front, a region where Einsatzgruppe A was operating. In this instance eight youths from the local children’s home concealed three machine guns, 15 rifles, and several thousand rounds of ammunition. Once their actions were discovered, the Germans immediately executed them.⁴¹

In 1941 the partisans also procured weapons and ammunition from the Germans by theft, by killing individual soldiers, or by capturing them in combat. For example, during the period from August to September 1941, partisans in the Vitebsk region seized 738 German rifles and 21 light machine guns, primarily in combat. Overall, based on a thorough survey of archival materials, the Belorussian historian Iakubovsky concluded that in 1941 Belorussian partisans seized from the enemy 3 artillery pieces, 133 machine guns, 124 sub-machine gun, 1,125 rifles, 3 radio sets, about 30,000 rifle cartridges, and 750 hand grenades.⁴² Doubtless, while this gathered or captured weaponry was not sufficient to equip completely partisan formations operating in occupied Belorussia, it certainly augmented the arms they procured by other means.

In addition to exploiting captured German weapons and ammunition, the partisans used other captured items. M. Dordik, my own father-in-law, related one such almost light-hearted incident that occurred in the summer of 1943. During the incident, the ‘*Burevestnik*’ [Sea bird] Partisan Brigade ambushed a group of German soldiers near Minsk and killed several German soldiers. Among the dead Germans was the handler of a large sheep dog that was also wounded in the attack. Marmulov, the brigade commander, ordered the dog be taken to the partisan camp where partisan medics treated the dog’s wounds. Subsequently, Marmulov renamed the dog ‘Dzhulbars’, in honour of the hero-dog in the popular pre-war film about life in the Soviet border guards (the title of the film was also *Dzhulbars*). Thereafter the dog became the brigade commander’s inseparable companion and accompanied him everywhere, including during combat operations. Unfortunately, the dog perished in the spring of 1944 during large scale anti-partisan operations conducted by German Army Group Centre forces against the partisans.

All of these measures aside, in 1941 the Soviet government organised a formal centralised supply system to equip and supply partisan forces, although, admittedly, it was not as effective as the system that evolved later in the war, particularly in 1944. In some sectors, the government

even activated partisan units before German forces arrived. To effect orderly resupply, the Soviet military established a network of central depots to supply partisans with arms, ammunition, and other equipment.⁴³ Several weeks after the Nazi invasion and after the Soviet decision to employ partisan warfare against German rear areas, Soviet authorities initiated production of material for partisan use in existing facilities located in relatively close proximity to the front so as to ease the problem of access to partisan forces. For example, on 14 July 1941, they converted a railway carriage repair plant in the city of Roslavl' (south-east of Smolensk) into a facility that could manufacture mines for the partisans. Weeks later, as the Germans advanced toward the city, the Soviets transferred the facility and its workers to the Belorussian city of Gomel', further south along the Dnepr River. Before the Germans seized Gomel' in September 1941, this facility had produced a total of 380 anti-tank mines, 450 special railroad demolition mines, and about 600 other types of mines.⁴⁴

Finally, the partisans also drew equipment and supplies from Red Army central supply depots. In this manner, according to official Soviet documents, by the end of the winter of 1941-42, Belorussian partisans had received a total of 9,560 rifles and carbines, 265 sub-machine guns, 3,800 pistols, 30,000 hand grenades, 125,000 cartridges for sub-machine guns, 1,710,000 rifle cartridges, and 15 tons of high explosives. They also received other materials necessary to conduct partisan warfare, such as spare gun barrels, binoculars, flare pistols, etc.⁴⁵ As the Nazi advance continued and German forces overran or destroyed these depots, the High Command assigned the Red Air Force the mission of delivering weapons and ammunition to the partisans. Thereafter, the percentage of air deliveries rose proportionally throughout the war; one quarter of all arms supplied to the partisans in 1942 were supplied by air and about half in 1944-45.⁴⁶

In addition to such items as rifles (including automatic rifles and rifles with silencers), light machine guns, and pistols and sub-machine guns, the guerrillas often also needed heavier infantry weapons to survive in combat with the better armed and trained Germans. This meant mortars, light anti-tank guns, light field guns, and ammunition and associated spare parts and ammunition. Despite clear need, the partisans never had more than a very limited quantity of these weapons. There were, of course, exceptions, particularly in the rear of German Army Group Centre in winter 1941-42, when some fortunate partisan detachments possessed heavy weapons, even including tanks. Laqueur cited

one of these rare examples, paraphrasing German archival documents, to state:

During the anti-guerrilla operation 'Zigeunerbaron' [Gypsy Baron], the Germans found to their consternation that the partisans had not only heavy guns but even a few tanks. (The Germans seldom used tanks against partisans, partly because they could not spare them, partly because the terrain was unsuitable.) Some large partisan units had been supplied with 45 and 75 mm guns.⁴⁷

In this instance the Germans were attacking a large Soviet force lodged in the German rear area south-west of Viaz'ma. The force consisted of General Belov's 1st Guards Cavalry Corps, the 4th Airborne Corps, several Soviet rifle divisions that had become separated from their parent army, and a large partisan force. The partisans had obtained the tanks from old Soviet supply stocks located near Dorogobuzh, the partisan's headquarters throughout the operation.

When the partisan force began its wholesale expansion in 1942, the need for weapons, ammunition, and explosives increased dramatically. Theft or capture of German equipment from troops and supply installations simply would no longer suffice, and more regular and orderly resupply was essential. In these circumstances the partisans tried desperately to produce some part of the urgently needed weapons themselves at special weapon shops. For example, the Minsk regional underground Party Committee issued a special directive to the commanders of partisan units operating in the region to establish a network of such weapon shops. As a result, in just the southern part of this region, a total of about 250 partisan blacksmiths, metal craftsmen, turners, and former gunsmiths worked to produce hand grenades, mines and, even more important, to alter German captured cartridges so that they could be used in Soviet-made small arms.⁴⁸

The area most infested by Soviet partisans was German Army Group Centre's rear area. Before the winter of 1941–42, up to 900 partisan detachments and groups numbering about 40,000 fighters operated in these regions.⁴⁹ General Heinz Guderian, the commander of Army Group Centre's German Second Panzer Army, reported on the impact these partisan forces had in his region. He stated that, in mid-September 1941, instead of the 70 supply trains required to meet the daily consumption needs of his Army Group, because of the shortage of locomotives and guerrilla sabotage of the rail lines, the Army Group was receiving only 23 trains daily.⁵⁰

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Another 850 Soviet partisan units comprising about 35,000 men operated during the summer and autumn of 1941 in German Army Group South's sector. According to German combat reports, from June through 16 September 1941, these forces managed to demolish 141 railway bridges.⁵¹ On 13 October 1941, the Soviet Information Bureau [*Sovinformbiuro*] reported about a group of Ukrainian partisans who penetrated the city of Dnepropetrovsk at night, reached the former dormitory of the Metallurgical Institute, where German troops were billeted, and threw grenades through the window, killing or wounding dozens of Germans.⁵²

PARTISAN DISRUPTION OF GERMAN ECONOMIC PLANS

Soviet authorities also ordered the partisans to destroy equipment and supplies that they could not evacuate and that the enemy could use. This applied also to local manufacturing. The partisans pressured local communities to curtail production and to sabotage the plans of local occupation authorities to restore manufacturing facilities in urban areas and to gather agricultural products in the surrounding countryside. In many cases, by doing so the partisans were able to frustrate German plans to exploit the occupied Soviet territories. For example, in November 1941 the Germans tried to re-establish several paper mills in the Dzerzhinsky region of Smolensk District. Partisans countered German plans by instructing former mill workers to hide some of the most vital mill equipment. Despite the fact that the Germans dispatched paper making specialists from Germany, they utterly failed to re-establish production at the mills.⁵³ Likewise, in September 1941 at the Krichev cement works in Belorussia, the underground Party organisation ordered local workers to sabotage electric engines brought from Germany to operate the plant. Once again, this resistance forced the Germans to abandon their attempts to resume cement production in Krichev.⁵⁴ Finally, during the first three months of German occupation of the Ukrainian city of Khar'kov, resistance by local workers prevented the Germans from re-establishing a single industrial enterprise.⁵⁵

The same phenomenon occurred in the agricultural sector where the Germans harboured ambitious plans to exploit Soviet agricultural potential. Even before the outbreak of war, Hitler's economic advisers advocated retention of the Soviet *kolkhoz* [collective farm] and *sovkhoz* [state farm] system for agricultural production in the conquered terri-

tories. In order to fulfil Germany's Four-Year Plan and obtain between 5 and 10 million tons of grain a year from the so-called 'German East', the majority of Hitler's economic planners suggested the collectivised system for agriculture production be retained, at least for the duration of the war. The only important figure to oppose this idea was Alfred Rosenberg, the Reichsminister for the occupied regions. He advocated breaking up the *kolkhoza* and introducing privatised agricultural production.⁵⁶

When Operation 'Barbarossa' began, Hitler and his economic advisers hoped to increase agricultural production in the fertile land of the 'German East', in order to compensate for production deficiencies elsewhere in German-controlled Europe. Characteristic of other Nazi policies, what mattered most to him was the quantity and quality of the produce and the efficiency of collection. Despite growing popular demands for agricultural reform and urgent requests from many peasants to abolish the *kolkhoz* system, at a 31 July 1941 conference, Herbert Backe, the German Minister of Agriculture, argued that the collective farming system was the only agricultural production system suited for use in German-occupied regions.⁵⁷ The Germans demonstrated the seriousness of their intent to obtain as much foodstuff as possible from the occupied territories by sending a significant amount of agricultural equipment to the occupied territories. During the three years of occupation, the Germans sent to the 'German East' upwards of 15,000 freight cars filled with agricultural machinery, valued at 172 million deutschmarks, including 7,000 tractors, 20,000 generators, and 250,000 steel ploughs. They also shipped east several thousand bulls, cows, pigs, and stallions to replenish breeding stock in the region.⁵⁸

However, subsequent German failures to obtain the desired levels of agricultural produce from the region during 1941 prompted them to alter their policy to retain collectivised agriculture. Consequently, on 15 February 1942, Hitler approved an agricultural reform programme that Minister Rosenberg proposed. Rosenberg's programme did not envision the complete abolition of collective farms. Instead, through successive stages, in the long run, it left 'all possibilities open' (possibilities as related to *kolkhoza*).⁵⁹ At least in part, acute popular disappointment over Germany's failure to disband the hated system of collectivised agriculture that Stalin had implemented in 1929–30 caused the German failure to achieve their ambitious plans in the agricultural sector. German agrarian policy bitterly disappointed those peasants who



Map 4: Soviet partisans with Group Below, 4 June 1942 (a German assessment)

dreamed of farming their own land. The peasants grumbled that, just as under Soviet rule, the Germans required them to work the land communally. Those who did work did so without much enthusiasm.

However, this peasant displeasure was only one side of the coin of Germany's problems in the agricultural sector. The other side related to partisan activity designed to deny the Germans foodstuffs grown and processed on the occupied land. Disputes have raged over which of these means was most effective. Frequently, collective farmers concealed food and fodder, hid cattle in the woods, and sabotaged agricultural equipment. In the autumn of 1941, German authorities in the Kletninsk region of Orel District sought to obtain 600 tons of grain and 3,000 tons of potatoes from the region. Due to sabotage by the local population,

however, they obtained nothing.⁶⁰ German documents provide concrete data on the amount of agricultural produce collected in the German Army Groups' rear areas by the spring of 1942. These all indicate a marked failure to receive the desired quantities. For example, the short-falls in Army Group Centre's sector amounted to 35 per cent of meat products, 40 per cent of grain, and 45 per cent of lard. In Army Group North's sector, these percentages were even higher, namely 60 per cent, 60 per cent, and 84 per cent, respectively.⁶¹

When assessing the effectiveness of partisan efforts in preventing the shipment of agricultural products from the occupied Soviet territories to Germany, Laqueur points out that the partisans influenced the situation primarily by waging active guerrilla warfare rather than by other means.⁶² Further, he claims that partisan efforts were far more productive in 1943 than in 1942.⁶³ Ziemke adds that during 1943, Army Group North was able to live almost entirely off the land, although the region in which it operated was one of the least productive agricultural regions of the Soviet Union.⁶⁴

The marked increase of sabotage by the local population in 1941, most of which the partisans or local underground Party instigated, prompted concerns on the part of occupation powers. For example, Oberlander, the Chief of German Intelligence in the southern sector of the Soviet–German front, issued a special memorandum, dated October 1941, in which he reported to Berlin that economic sabotage by local inhabitants potentially posed greater dangers to the Reich than the partisan movement itself.⁶⁵

Some historians, like Armstrong, have challenged the contention that Soviet partisans played the major role in denying the Germans their desired quantities of agricultural produce.⁶⁶ At the same time, however, he admitted that partisan activities had a serious effect on non-agricultural production, such as their interference with lumber production. Armstrong cited German documents indicating that, by August 1943, partisan actions had deprived the Germans of about 80 per cent of the crude logs and processed timber they needed in the Ukraine and had destroyed about half of the sawmills in Belorussia.⁶⁷ This, in turn, adversely affected coal production in the Donbas because, as today, the mines there could not be worked without an adequate supply of timber props.

A German assessment prepared after the war assessed the impact of Soviet partisan activity on German economic plans up to August 1944 and described the impact as devastating, and elaborated:

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Even at that time, with the end of the war still nine months away, the partisans were interfering with production in Prussia – part of Germany itself. East Prussia was reported full of small groups of partisan paratroopers, who, however, had so far confined their activities to scouting and made few terror raids. Still, by frightening the inhabitants, they made harvesting difficult, and in a region 210 miles northeast of Berlin, they seriously hampered the yield of wood . . .⁶⁸

PARTISAN COMMUNICATIONS

One of the most acute problems Soviet partisans faced in 1941 was in the realm of communications. The initial partisan detachments primarily employed radio equipment they gathered from the battlefield or captured from the Germans. However, that radio equipment was in short supply and was generally inadequate to satisfy the requirement for tighter central control of the movement from Moscow. The partisans also lacked electric power sources, batteries, receiving and transmitting equipment, and spare parts, none of which could be supplied in sufficient quantities from the Soviet rear area. Airlift was the main means for doing so, and, even though the transport of radio equipment required relatively little air cargo space, cargo aircraft were in short supply. While partisan commanders did not worship the radio or modern technical means of communications, it was clear to them from the very beginning that radio equipment was indispensable. It was necessary not only for liaison and communication with higher headquarters but also for transmitting orders and intelligence information.

Most post-war assessments confirmed this need. For example, Laqueur wrote, 'Radio communications were of great psychological importance; there was no feeling of isolation, one of the commonest drawbacks of partisan warfare throughout history. Add to this that the partisans received warnings of impending German attacks, and their offensive operations were effectively co-ordinated.'⁶⁹

Radio communication remained a deficiency in the entire Soviet Partisan Movement throughout its existence. Beginning in the spring of 1942, the Soviet High Command airlifted or parachuted a number of specially trained radio operators equipped with special radio sets into the partisans' operational areas. Despite these measures, as late as mid-summer of 1942, the Central Headquarters of the Partisan Movement

had radio contact with only 10 per cent of its subordinate partisan formations, and by mid-November 1942, it had established radio links with 20 per cent of its partisan units.⁷⁰ A Soviet source published in the early 1960s indicates that, by the beginning of 1944, the partisans possessed 424 radio sets by which the Central Headquarters controlled 1,131 individual partisan detachments.⁷¹ As in other areas, however, Soviet sources often exaggerate such figures. For example, a Soviet book on the subject published in 1988 claimed that, in June and September 1943, the number of radio sets in partisan units was 858 and 970, respectively.⁷² However, a more recent article in a Soviet journal cited archival materials to correct this error. It decreased these figures to 300 and 421 sets, respectively, which are probably far more accurate.⁷³ These new figures do lend greater credence to earlier Soviet accounts.

Because of the shortage of radio stations during the initial stage of the partisan movement, the Soviets relied upon messengers for communications between various partisan groups and underground Party cells. This, however, delayed the transmission of Party or Red Army orders and instructions to partisan forces. Often, in fact, these missives never reached the partisans. Conversely, information carried by messengers from the partisan detachments to higher headquarters was so delayed that it simply lost its value, if it reached the headquarters at all.⁷⁴

In addition, the possession of a radio set by some partisan commanders was a very important factor in enabling them to assume control over neighbouring partisan formations that did not have radios. It also tended to legitimise partisan forces and their commanders. To the local population, the presence of a radio symbolised that the partisan force officially represented Soviet power and authority, and that the partisan commander with whom Moscow dealt by radio was an official envoy of the Soviet state, in essence its plenipotentiary in the occupied territory.

PARTISANS DURING THE BATTLE OF MOSCOW

One of the most interesting facets of the history of the Soviet Partisan Movement was its activity during the Battle for Moscow, which officially began on 30 September 1941. After delaying his advance on Moscow by turning his forces south in early September to eliminate Soviet forces defending Kiev, Hitler planned to resume his advance on the Soviet capital. Consequently, in late September, he ordered General Guderian's Second Panzer Group, which was heavily engaged in the Ukraine, to return to Army Group Centre's control, and he reinforced

the army group with General Reinhardt's Fourth Panzer Group from the Leningrad sector. On 30 September 1941, when the Germans launched their massive offensive code named 'Typhoon', to seize the Soviet capital, they possessed significant advantage in material.⁷⁵

However, the Germans failed to capture Moscow before the onset of winter as Hitler had ordered. At first, the Germans' drive along the old road that Napoleon had travelled a century and a half before unfolded with all of the fury of the crushing winds of a genuine typhoon. In September and October, many German generals truly believed that they were very close to destroying the last Soviet fighting forces before Moscow and bringing the Soviet Union tumbling down. Nor was their optimism unjustified. In October advancing German forces succeeded in encircling six-seven Soviet armies between Viaz'ma and Briansk, killing or capturing tens of thousands of Red Army soldiers and seizing many tanks, guns, and other military booty. By the end of October, German armoured spearheads were within 40 miles of Moscow, and some Soviet ministries and foreign embassies had evacuated their personnel eastward to Kuibyshev on the Volga River.⁷⁶

However, the closer the Germans came to their goal, the stiffer Red Army resistance became and the more costly was the operation. By the end of November, Franz Halder, the German General Staff chief, noted in his diary that the total losses of German armies in the East had reached 743,112 officers and men (not counting the sick) or 23 per cent of the entire 3.2 million-man force.⁷⁷ Just during the period from 16 November through 5 December, when the Germans made their most desperate attempts to break through to Moscow, they lost 155,000 men killed and wounded, 800 tanks, 300 guns, and about 1,500 aircraft.⁷⁸ Compounding their difficulties, at the same time, the partisans intensified their sabotage activities against German rail communications.⁷⁹ Then on 5 December 1941, at a time when the Germans could literally see Moscow, Soviet forces began a strategic counteroffensive that utterly frustrated German plans to terminate the war victoriously in 1941. Reports from Tokyo from the Soviet master spy R. Sorge materially assisted the defenders of Moscow. By disclosing to Moscow information that the Japanese did not plan to attack the Soviet Union, the Soviet High Command was able to transfer a critical number of its divisions from the Far East to bolster its efforts in the West.⁸⁰ The civilian populace of Moscow also exerted tremendous efforts in the defence of their native city. Four hundred and fifty thousand of them, of which 75 per cent were women, helped construct Moscow's imposing defence



Map 5: Soviet partisan activity in the Smolensk region, 16 June 1942 (a German assessment)

lines, including thousands of bunkers, pillboxes, trenches, and anti-personnel and anti-tank obstacles.⁸¹

The Soviet victory at Moscow was immensely important both militarily and psychologically to the Soviets and Germans alike. General Gunther Blumentritt, German Fourth Army's chief of staff, recalled how German generals, anticipating the catastrophe at Moscow, began reading Caulaincourt's grim story of Napoleon's disastrous winter in Russia in 1812. He claimed the memory of Napoleon's fate began to haunt the dreams of the Nazi invaders.⁸² And the failure was indeed great, for it was unprecedented. For the first time in more than two years of unbroken military victories, the armies of Hitler were in retreat before a superior force. The myth of German Army invincibility perished at Moscow. Moscow had not been taken; nor had Leningrad, Stalingrad or the Caucasus oil fields. The Soviet victory at Moscow was a turning point in the war, not only on the Soviet-German front. Although they did not play a crucial role in it, Soviet partisans did make certain contributions to the Moscow victory.

During the Battle for Moscow, partisan forces did not operate with uniform efficiency in German rear areas across the broad expanse of the front. For example, in the western portion of the Ukraine, where a separatist population predominated, there were only the merest traces of a partisan movement. Elsewhere, the large distances between front-line and occupied areas inhibited contacts between the local population and the command and control echelon of the partisan movement, and the harsh conditions of an unusually cold Russian winter adversely affected partisan survival and operations. One source accurately described the situation, writing, 'Finally, the first winter of 1941-42 hurt the movement everywhere: forays to collect food and fuel meant tracks in the snow, and naked trees often meant naked guerrillas. In order to survive, various bands amalgamated into good-sized camps, and some of these became vulnerable to the German attacks.'⁸³

Despite these many shortcomings in partisan warfare and the hardships they faced, the winter of 1941-42 was not a complete failure for the partisan fighters. Considerable evidence indicates that they made a substantial contribution to Soviet victory. A German source used German reports and captured Russian materials to describe the role of partisan warfare during the Battle of Moscow, and concluded:

Although the partisans had already made themselves felt through sabotage and harassment, their real importance as a fighting force

developed as the siege of Moscow reached its decisive stage in the winter of 1941–42. It was then that the irregular forces behind the German lines coordinated their operations with those of the Red Army to prevent the quick victory sought by Hitler.⁸⁴

During the Red Army's counter-offensive, partisan units primarily sought to assist advancing Soviet troops in liberating occupied territories west of Moscow, principally by conducting reconnaissance and providing intelligence information. The partisans also attempted to prevent the Germans from blowing up or evacuating important facilities and matériel. A *Pravda* editorial of 15 December 1941 underscored the importance of the latter mission and appealed to all partisans to fulfil it.⁸⁵

Several good examples exist of partisan operations during the Battle for Moscow. One of many partisan detachments active in the winter of 1941–42 was a detachment commanded by D. Teterchev, which operated south of Moscow in the Cherepetsk region of Tula District. This detachment demolished several bridges and sections of roadbed along the Likhvin–Kosel'sk–Sukhinichi railroad and destroyed or damaged five locomotives. After obtaining information that the Germans were preparing a train carrying material and ammunition transferred from the town of Likhvin (now it is called Chekalin), the partisans blew up the rails near the railway station at Myshbor. As a result of the attack, the Red Army seized about 350 railway carriages and platforms loaded with trucks, motorcycles, various weapons, and ammunition.⁸⁶

During the winter of 1941–42 in Belorussia, partisan detachments led by M. Shmyrev, M. Diachkov, M. Birulin, and others managed to seize control of a large region in the Vitebsk District, and these detachments kept the so-called 'Surazh Gates' open until September 1942. The Soviet High Command used this gaping hole in the front to send supplies and sabotage groups to the partisans and to receive able-bodied males from occupied regions to join the Red Army. During the summer of 1942, 1,500 men traversed this gap into the safety of Soviet lines.⁸⁷ In the same period, another 2,000 men did so from the neighbouring Mechovsky region and yet another 3,000 from the Ushachi region.⁸⁸ By the autumn of 1942, a total of about 25,000 men had moved through this important escape route into the Soviet rear area (see Maps 1 and 5).⁸⁹

This movement into and out of the German rear area was no easy task for so large a number of personnel. The families and relatives of those who fled to join the Red Army incurred the main threat. When the

Germans re-established control in these regions, the first victims among the local population were those whom official reports and often only rumours accused of collaborating with the guerrillas and Soviet authorities. A missing son was clear evidence of collaboration. In this case, however, partisans often pretended to engage in forced recruitment to deny the German occupation authorities of the pretext for punishing the missing man's family. Given that the common punishment for any form of collaboration was execution, therefore, even this weak argument was better than none.

Parenthetically, later still, in the autumn of 1943, a large scale Red Army offensive operation in the Poles'e District in Belorussia produced yet another wide gap in the German front line called the '*Rudobel'skie vorota*' (the 'Rudobel'skie Gates'). The creation of this gap was immensely important for partisan formations in the Minsk, Pinsk, and Poles'e Districts. Clearly understanding the value of such gaps from their 1942 experiences, Party structures and partisan organisations in Belorussia strove to exploit the gap by sending through it to the Soviet rear as many recruits as possible from the partisan zones. Subsequently, plans negotiated by the 65th Army, in whose sector the gap was located, and the local partisan leadership made it possible to move about 10,000 males through '*Rudobel'skie vorota*' during December 1943 (see Maps 11 and 12).⁹⁰ The population in the partisan region also used the gap to send foodstuffs to the rear, even cartloads of material and produce from such distant regions as western Belorussia.⁹¹ In March 1942 several partisan detachments from the Minsk, Poles'e, and Pinsk Districts of Belorussia, under the unified command of V. Z. Korzh, conducted a raid which ranged over several hundred kilometres through German Army Group Centre's rear area and inflicted considerable losses on the enemy.⁹²

Soviet partisans were also active in the Crimea where they attempted to assist the beleaguered Soviet defenders of Sevastopol'. German forces besieged this famous naval base for 250 days, from 30 October 1941 until 4 July 1942, at the same time containing a Soviet amphibious force that had landed on the Kerch peninsula in December 1941 to relieve the Soviet Sevastopol' garrison. Although Soviet sources place German losses in the Crimea at close to 300,000 men and officers, this is probably an exaggeration.⁹³ In the winter of 1941-42, Soviet partisans in the Crimea concentrated on disrupting enemy lines of communications. General Erich von Manstein, the commander of German Eleventh Army which operated in the Crimea at that time, later confirmed that the partisans were active from the first days of occupation on this peninsula,

but their attempts to disrupt the communication network in that region were primarily of nuisance value only.⁹⁴

During the first period of the war the local population in occupied Belorussia and many districts of the Russian Republic generally supported the Soviet partisans, helped them obtain foodstuffs and clothing, and often provided information about enemy plans, strengths, and force dispositions. For example, from February through April 1942, while General Belov's large force was operating behind German lines, the population of the Dorogobuzh region of Smolensk District donated 689 tons of rye, 300 tons of meat, 39 tons of barley, 1,113 tons of potatoes, and 270 tons of oats to the partisans. The inhabitants of nearby El'nia region contributed 6,100 pairs of shoes, 1,500 sets of civilian clothing, and about 7,000 pairs of underwear units.⁹⁵ Sometimes the local population assisted the partisans in actual combat operations. For example, in November 1943, when German forces were retreating from Poles'e District in Belorussia in response to a major Soviet offensive, about 2,500 local inhabitants joined the partisans in preparing various defensive, including anti-tank, obstacles along the main German withdrawal routes in the Narovlianskii region of Gomel' District. In the course of a single day's work, they managed to block the Verbovichi, Muchoedy, Golovchitsi, and Techkov highway.⁹⁶ Of course, it took considerable political agitation by the partisan leadership in Poles'e to assemble such a host of civilians, but the fact remains that the popular involvement did succeed in impeding organised German retreat and assisted advancing Red Army units.

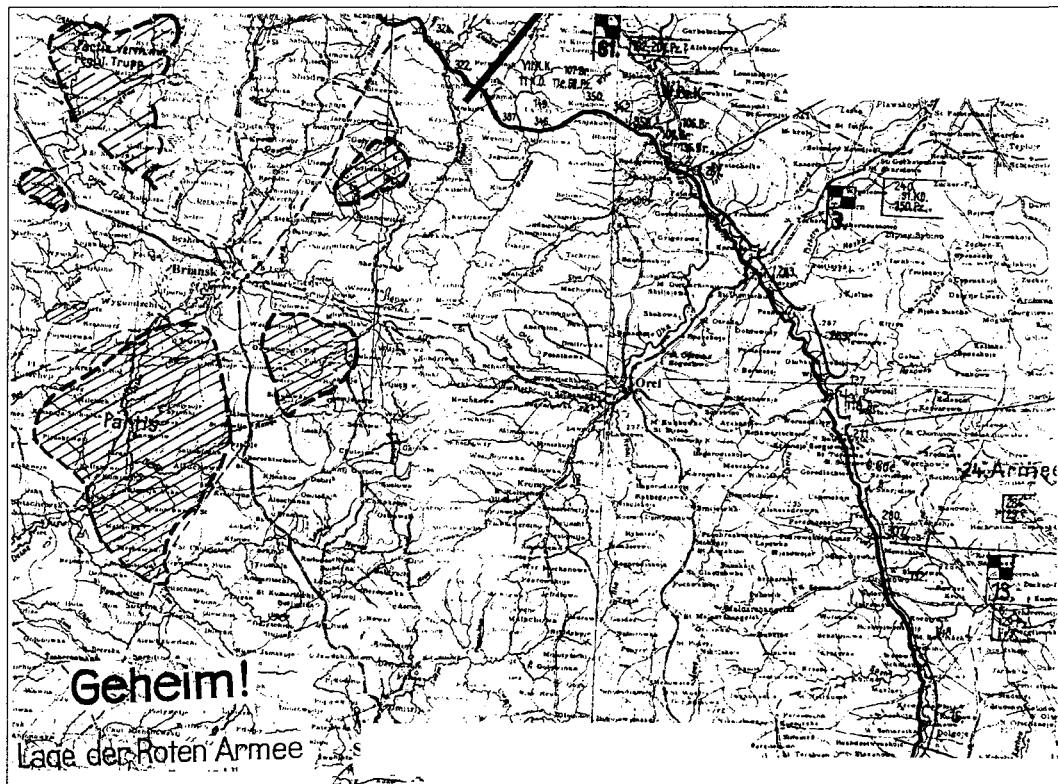
Thus, month by month after their June 1941 invasion, the German command recorded the increasing activity of the Soviet Partisan Movement. In response the Germans were obliged to strengthen their security units, especially those responsible for protection of rail lines. The German High Command was more than just uneasy over the Soviet partisans' increased activity. With good reason, the headquarters of German security forces in occupied Belorussia officially reported that, since February 1942, the task of fighting against partisans had become a routine daily activity and a concern of the German civil and military administration throughout the region.⁹⁷

Partisan activities were most effective when they were conducted in concert with planned Red Army operations and when the partisans received specific instructions from supervising *front* headquarters. However, some sources question whether this co-operation was either close or effective. Thus, on the basis of German sources, K. Macksey

wrote, 'Lack of co-ordination was always the fundamental cause of breakdown among partisan forces; restrictive circumstances and poor communications usually militated hard against their efficiency.'⁹⁸ Despite this negative opinion, there is considerable evidence in Soviet sources, including archival materials, of widespread and often fruitful co-ordination between partisans and regular army forces during the winter of 1941-42. Naturally, this co-operation was most effective when partisan forces were operating in relatively close proximity to the front. Just a few of the more notable examples will suffice.

In mid-December 1941, while German panzer forces were withdrawing from the Volokolamsk region west of Moscow, it was very important for the retreating Germans to retain one of the few existing bridges over the Sestra River. Consequently, the Soviet Western Front headquarters ordered a local partisan detachment to blow up the bridge. A small demolition group commanded by A. Andrianov successfully carried out the mission. As a result, Soviet aviation units discovered and attacked a large concentration of German tanks and lorries stuck in a bottleneck at the destroyed river crossing. The Soviet air attack cost the Germans about 100 lorries destroyed, although main German forces located an alternate crossing and escaped across the river.⁹⁹ Wehrmacht officers themselves attested to instances of such successful co-operation. For example, German officers noted in a post-war study, 'During large scale enemy breakthroughs, or German withdrawals, strong partisan groups frequently managed to coordinate their operations with those of Soviet cavalry, ski units, infiltrated infantry, or paratroopers.'¹⁰⁰

To promote closer and more reliable co-operation, partisan leaders often sent personal messengers through the front lines to the headquarters of Red Army formations, and *front* headquarters dispatched liaison officers to partisan commands to participate directly in specific operational planning. For example, in January 1942, during an offensive by the Western Front's 10th Army toward the city of Kirov, the army's political department organised two meetings with leaders of partisan detachments operating south-east of Smolensk. As a result, combined headquarters were activated to co-ordinate partisan operations with 10th Army forces, and each partisan detachment was assigned a specific area of operations. Fulfilling their assigned mission, in early February the partisans mined the Briansk-Ludinovo highway several times and succeeded in blowing up nine enemy tanks and 20 lorries. On 14 February 1942, the partisans themselves liberated the town of Diat'kov.¹⁰¹



Map 6: Soviet partisan activity in the Briansk region, 16 June 1942 (a German assessment)

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During the same general period, an advanced detachment of Soviet 30th Army, commanded by Colonel P. Chanchibadze, was pursuing withdrawing German forces in the Volokolamsk region. To facilitate his advance, Colonel Chanchibadze established contact with local partisans and requested they conduct reconnaissance for his further advance. They did so effectively, and, in addition, the partisan unit commander provided the advance detachment with a guide to enable the detachment to use the safest route to its objective in the Shakhovskoi region. Meanwhile, in the Tula region south of Moscow, a partisan detachment commanded by N. Esipov fought successfully in support of the Western Front's 50th Army and participated in the liberation of several towns in this region.¹⁰²

Although lack of radio communications was a major partisan deficiency at that point during the war, there were some instances when partisan commanders received operational orders from Red Army commands by radio. This was more characteristic for those partisan formations which operated deeper in the enemy's rear area at distances messengers could not traverse. At times, lively exchanges of encoded radio messages took place between partisan staffs and units and Red Army headquarters and staffs. Partisan staffs often transmitted requests for supplies and airlift support by radio to Red Army signal centres in the Soviet rear.¹⁰³ German sources recognised that 'the larger partisan units received their directives by short-wave radio, so that they had up-to-date information about current military developments in their respective sectors'.¹⁰⁴

Soviet sources confirm this fact by describing several such instances during the Soviet winter offensive of 1941–42. On 13 January 1942, during the expanded Soviet Moscow counteroffensive, the Soviet North-western Front ordered the 2nd Partisan Brigade operating in Leningrad District to seize the town of Kholm in Kalinin District on the night of 18 January and to hold it until the arrival of 3rd Shock Army forces. Accordingly, eight partisan detachments numbering a total of 800 men conducted an 80-kilometre march from their assembly area to their objective and seized a major portion of the town. And after it had become clear that 3rd Shock Army forces would not be able to break through to Kholm, the partisan forces withdrew. The partisans claimed to have inflicted heavy losses on the enemy, including dozens of killed and wounded, 99 lorries, two radio stations, and a fuel storage tank.¹⁰⁵

Western sources confirm that radio communications frequently

played a key role in partisan warfare, particularly after the first winter campaign. One source noted:

From the winter of 1941–42 on, one can say that the partisan system of organization depended almost completely on radio. Those bands, like the roving bands which could be provided with powerful sending and receiving sets, were more or less independent and could even bring numerous other partisan bands under their jurisdiction. Smaller units, which perhaps had only feeble or unreliable sets, were subordinated to operational centres, one of whose major tasks was to maintain a powerful and constantly functioning radio station.¹⁰⁶

One of the most positive and extensive examples of co-operation between partisans and Red Army forces occurred during the period February through June 1942 when Smolensk partisan commands closely co-operated with General Belov's group operating south-west of Viaz'ma. Belov's group, consisting of his 1st Guard Cavalry Corps, the 4th Airborne Corps, and several divisions separated from Soviet 33rd Army, struggled long and hard in German Army Group Centre's rear area near El'nia, Viaz'ma, and Dorogobuzh (see Maps 2, 3 and 4). The fluid situation that existed along the Soviet–German front at that time was conducive to this close co-operation. Specifically, from late December 1941 through April 1942, German forces withdrawing from the close approaches to Moscow often lost contact with one another. Soviet Western Front forces then streamed through large gaps in the German lines to attempt to outflank the Germans and penetrate into their rear areas. These penetrating Red Army formations, in conjunction with partisan groups already operating in the German rear, had orders to sever German lines of communications and facilitate the advance of Western Front forces. During the operation, the Soviet High Command inserted airborne troops and supplies by parachute and air-land to reinforce the partisans who were then active in the Bogoroditsk forests west and south-west of Viaz'ma and in the El'nia region. The combined cavalry, airborne, and partisan force liberated about 10,000 square kilometres of territory.¹⁰⁷ Ultimately, German Army Group Centre employed up to seven regular divisions to counter these bold operations. It took the Germans from April through June to clear the region of Belov's force. In June 1942 Belov's regular forces regained Soviet lines near Kirov, but the large partisan formations remained in the German rear area.¹⁰⁸

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Partisan achievements in disrupting the enemy communications network were rather impressive. During the winter of 1941–42 in the central sector of the front, partisans derailed 224 trains, blew up 650 bridges, and destroyed 1,850 enemy vehicles. During the Soviet Moscow offensive (from December 1941 to April 1942) partisans employed sabotage to delay German rail traffic for a total of 180 days.¹⁰⁹ In the Ukraine partisan formations operating in the Khar'kov District and Donbas achieved similar successes, particularly those operating in close proximity to the front. They co-operated with forces of the Soviet South-western and Southern Fronts. For example, just in the sector of the Southern Front's 12th Army, 17 partisan detachments operated with a total of 500 men.¹¹⁰ From October 1941 through February 1942, their successes amounted to dozens of killed and wounded German personnel, 30 destroyed vehicles, 14 tank-cars, and several demolished railway and highway bridges.¹¹¹

Thus, in general terms, extensive Soviet offensive operations in the winter of 1941–42 along the entire extent of the Soviet–German front and the frequent Soviet penetration of German defences produced the sort of fluid situations that partisans could exploit. As they did so, the partisans inflicted significant losses on the Germans, particularly in terms of matériel and the harassment effect of their operations and, to a lesser extent, of manpower. Their operations certainly made a bad German situation worse. Even by mid-November 1941, Hitler seemed to sense the approaching disaster on the Soviet–German front, and, as one German source noted, he displayed 'the first traces of resignation'.¹¹² The ever astute and perceptive Franz Halder, in a 19 November statement to his inner circle, surprised his listeners by stating, 'The recognition that the two opposing blocks were incapable of defeating each other would lead to a negotiated peace.'¹¹³ Halder underscored the gravity of the situation by citing some even more extreme measures suggested by representatives of the German High Command to ameliorate the situation. For example, on 7 January 1942, he noted in his diary that, 'Colonel Ochsner tries to talk me into beginning gas warfare against the Russians.'¹¹⁴ The British author D. Irving claimed that, from the spring of 1942, some German generals persistently suggested that Hitler authorise the use of poison gas against the partisans, asserting that the best way to deal with unlawful partisan warfare was to implement their own unlawful but effective measures.¹¹⁵

Many post-war German assessments recognised the positive role

played by Soviet partisans in the defeat of German forces during the Battle for Moscow. For example, one stated:

Exploiting this situation, the Red Army sent cavalry through the thin German lines to join the partisans, who continually attacked convoys on the last main supply line, the Smolensk–Moscow road. The attacks now were intensified, virtually imprisoning the German army before the Soviet capital . . . The Battle of Moscow was decided, and the partisans played an important part in the outcome. For the first time they gave vital tactical assistance to the Red Army.¹¹⁶

Although numerous Party underground organisations operated in many cities and towns during this period, they have not received the recognition they warrant. For example, in Belorussia an underground group led by K. Zaslonov sabotaged the railway centre at Orsha and damaged about 170 locomotives.¹¹⁷ In the Ukraine a local underground group sabotaged 51 locomotives in the locomotive depot at Dnepropetrovsk.¹¹⁸ Underground activities by railway workers in the Belorussian city of Gomel' were so active that the Nazi Railway Directory in Minsk reported sabotage regularly delayed train traffic in Gomel' for as many as 40–50 hours at a time.¹¹⁹

PARTISAN TACTICS THROUGH WINTER 1941–42

Partisan tactics matured in consonance with the increasing scale of partisan operations. Normally, on the offensive partisan forces deployed in such a way as to provide maximum security and strength in attack, while on the defensive they offered as small and elusive a target as possible. To provide for maximum security, larger partisan units selected permanent campsites carefully to ensure maximum concealment, inaccessibility to the Germans, defensibility, and quick escapes if they were detected and attacked. Partisan camps studded the countryside behind the German lines and were most often located in marshes, impassable woods, gorges, and hidden caverns. The partisans protected their camps with minefields, skilfully placed observation posts, and dug-in weapon emplacements. Generally, partisans established one or two alternative camps located a safe distance from their primary camp and stocked these with arms and provisions. Partisan observation posts and combat outposts

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were arrayed in depth and were mutually supporting. When a region was heavily infested with partisan units, whenever possible, they would employ smaller camps as outposts.

As a rule partisan forces moved only at night to avoid detection, particularly by German aircraft, and they observed stringent security measures. They planned their marches carefully in advance, deliberately choosing the most inaccessible terrain, and, whenever possible, exploiting little known or seldom used roads and rivers crossings at remote fords. Adherence to patterned or stereotypical behaviour (in Russian, *shablon*) was deadly to partisan units, for repeated use of the same march-route could lead to ambush, encirclement, and destruction. When groups of partisans marched across unfamiliar terrain, they marked their route for groups following behind by using simple and unobtrusive signs, such as cracked twigs or blades of grass, artificial animal scents, or small stones arranged to indicate direction. Since partisans normally attacked only at night and the approach routes to their targets were often through woods, dense brush, and swamps, it was necessary for all members of the partisan group to be intimately familiar with terrain details. This was accomplished by map study and, when feasible, by personal inspection of the ground itself. Local inhabitants often provided valuable information about the terrain surrounding an objective as well as detailed plans of the installation to be attacked.

Partisans normally employed small, highly manoeuvrable units to carry out combat missions. Speed was of the essence given the limited firepower and resilience of partisan forces. There were, however, some exceptions to this rule when Soviet partisans attacked larger German forces. This occurred on several occasions during General Belov's raid and in the partisan-infested Briansk region in 1941–42. For example, in the Briansk region, partisan forces halted a train carrying a German combat engineer battalion, opened fire on the Germans with heavy machine guns, and succeeded in killing most of the battalion's personnel before the Germans were able to evacuate the train.¹²⁰

THE CREATION OF PARTISAN REGIONS

One of the most interesting phenomena associated with partisan warfare in 1941–42 was the partisans' ability to seize and successfully hold large areas in the German rear area. These so-called 'partisan regions', which the partisans controlled nearly totally, existed in many districts in

Belorussia, and the Smolensk, Leningrad, Orel regions. On the basis of German reports, one source correctly noted:

In 1942 the guerrillas [Soviet partisans] were strong enough to start setting up 'partisanskie kraia' [partisan regions], which were completely free of Germans. Particularly large regions were to be found in Orel province (72 detachments of 18,000 partisans) and Smolensk province (72 detachments of 22,000 partisans).¹²¹

The first of these partisan regions appeared in the autumn of 1941, and they grew dramatically in number and scope thereafter (see Map 6). During the winter of 1941–42 and the subsequent spring, the number of partisan regions reached a total of 11, including four in Belorussia and four in the Smolensk region, two in the Orel region, and one in the Leningrad region.¹²² One of the most interesting features of these partisan controlled zones was the nature of everyday life. Specifically, normal Soviet law prevailed over every aspect of the daily life of the population. Soviet political apparatuses ruled, complete with chairmen of the local Soviets, various governing boards, and institutions. Even collective farms, hospitals, and schools functioned in many of these regions. By early 1942 partisan-built airfields and airstrips permitted routine air delivery of supplies, liaison, and other personnel into these regions. So threatening were these zones to German occupation authorities that they tried strenuously to recapture these areas in late 1941 and the first half of 1942 but with only partial success.

The existence of these partisan regions was generally useful to the Soviet cause. In the first place, they denied the Germans access to vast areas and to human and material resources. Second they served as immense fixed bases, essentially breeding grounds and training areas for partisan forces, from which large or small partisan formations could be dispatched for attacks on German lines of communications. Third, the regions offered a measure of security for thousands of partisans, members of their families, and local populations. Partisans who operated in these areas were generally immune to small police actions and could exist there for months relatively undisturbed. Last but not least, the regions promoted political stability and improved morale and discipline not only for the partisan fighters but also for sizeable indigenous populations.

Partisans did encounter some problems as they administered and operated within and outside these regions. Although the partisan formations in these areas were often large and numerous, they lacked the

mobility necessary to operate effectively in a tactical sense as well as the firepower required to engage large German forces successfully. It was difficult for them to re-deploy quickly to counter threats to other detachments that were under attack. In other words, their numerical strength did not accurately indicate their capabilities. They were generally ineffective against large and determined German forces, and they had difficulty ensuring the territorial integrity and security of the entire region.

To assist them in their work and improve security in the region, the partisans and local political authorities formed special self-defence groups and detachments in many villages and towns in the partisan regions. Normally, these groups conducted reconnaissance, prepared alternative bases for partisans and camps for their families, procured foodstuffs and fodder, collected weapons and ammunition on the battlefield, and treated the sick and wounded. On rare occasions, self-defence detachments participated in active combat operations by augmenting partisan forces.

Thus the partisans attempted to exert total influence over the local inhabitants of partisan regions. In those instances when German forces compelled partisan forces to abandon the regions, the partisans intimidated the population by threatening retribution against any and all collaborators. Intimidation played a definite role, since many would-be collaborators did exist. However, in actuality, this partisan control was far from total. Thus, one Western analyst was correct in concluding, 'The most prolific source of information about partisans [Soviet] naturally came through informers, whose news waxed and waned in sympathy with German success and failure, not only at the front but in relations with local populace.'¹²³ Another Western observer estimated that about 5 per cent of the population in the temporarily occupied Soviet territories were actual German informers.¹²⁴ Yet another claimed that up to 1 million people living in the occupied part of the Soviet Union collaborated actively with the Nazi regime, primarily by joining the 'Osttruppen', persons working in the pay of Germany.¹²⁵

Some Soviet documentation supports these claims. For example, I. Zuevich, a former underground Party secretary in the Rogachev region of Mogilev district, recalled an instructive episode that was clearly not just an isolated incident. In this instance, local partisans had carried out several successful sabotage attacks against the Rogachev-Mogilev railway line. Suddenly, however, the Germans began to demine explosive devices installed by the partisans. Partisan intelligence

organs later reported that German agents from the indigenous population had observed the mining activities and had exposed the mining efforts to their new masters. After the partisans liquidated the Nazi espionage network (primarily disaffected local villagers), they resumed their successful destructive attacks on the railway line.¹²⁶

Exploiting Soviet sources, Erickson cited a nearly identical episode that occurred in another front sector. He wrote:

German counter-intelligence activity found, as Soviet partisans themselves admit, ready sources of information and support: there was the extreme danger posed to partisan units in the Bryansk forest by a group of collaborationists, one a woodsman who not only knew the woods but also the partisan locations, another a deserter from a 'destruction battalion' who went over to the Germans.¹²⁷

These incidents explain why the partisan leaders paid considerable attention to halting all forms of collaboration on the part of the indigenous population with the Germans. As was stated at a joint meeting of partisans and villagers in the Kamenka Pustoshinsky region of Kalinin District, 'If somebody from our village openly or secretly renders assistance to the invaders or their henchmen, we shall annihilate him as a deadly enemy' to intimidate possible collaborators.¹²⁸ Another partisan leader is said to have told a local *starosta* [village chief], 'There's nowhere to go to get away from us. There is no salvation anywhere on Soviet soil for a traitor, and never will be.'¹²⁹

In reality, Party authorities and partisans did punish collaborators severely; often by immediate death. A laconic but significant citation from the diary of one partisan sums up the matter as he wrote, 'Shot a traitor. Morale good! In the evening, I went to do the same to his wife. We are sorry that she leaves three children behind. But war is war! Any humane consideration shown toward traitors is misplaced'.¹³⁰ Even those who collaborated with the Germans in minor respects were sometimes punished by death sentence. A German official report explained, stating:

The deserter Mikhail Alexeyev, born 17 November 1919, is from Staraya Niviki and was picked up by partisans there on 2 March [1942]; in addition to him they took eight other inhabitants of Staraya Niviki. They were taken to a squadron which was staying in Saprónovo and were enrolled in it. One man was shot immediately because he had made garrison caps for the Germans.¹³¹

Another report by the German security service assessed partisan efforts in the winter of 1941–42 to intimidate the local population. It concluded, ‘On the other hand, it has been established that the partisans now attempt to terrorise all Russians who collaborate with the [German] troops, e.g., members of the indigenous auxiliary police, mayors, *kolkhoz* chairmen.’¹³²

On the other hand, the ubiquitous NKVD instilled fear not only in the partisan rank and file fighters but also over the partisan leadership itself. Aleksei German, a famous Soviet film producer who once prepared a documentary film about the partisans, described an intriguing incident in the newspaper *Moskovskii novosti* [Moscow News]. After viewing German’s documentary, General A. N. Saburov, a Hero of the Soviet Union and one of the most remarkable partisan leaders in the Ukraine, shared with German an interesting vignette about one of the documentary’s main characters, a certain Major Plokhoi (meaning in Russian ‘Major Bad’). It seemed that, after Saburov had organised his partisan detachment and reported the fact to Central Partisan Headquarters, written instructions appeared signed by this Major Plokhoi to have Saburov shot as a traitor and impostor. This silent shadow of a death sentence followed Saburov day and night for a considerable length of time. In mid-1942, however, Stalin finally met Saburov in the Kremlin. By then, Saburov was recognised as one of the most prominent Soviet partisan leaders, and the death sentence was revoked. Saburov added, probably truthfully, ‘I was far more frightened of Major Plokhoi than of the Germans.’¹³³ In this regard, the American journalist H. Baldwin’s comments about the wartime role of the NKVD were both eloquent and correct, as he wrote, ‘The guns of the Russian army were aimed at the enemy; the guns of the NKVD were aimed at the backs of the Russian *muzhiks* [peasants].’¹³⁴

By skilfully combining agitation with intimidation, the partisans did much to detect and assemble healthy Russian males of draft age and return them across the front lines to Soviet territory. In the Orel District alone, by the summer of 1942, the partisans succeeded in sending 15,000 conscripts to the Soviet rear area.¹³⁵ Likewise, Belorussian partisans provided rudimentary training to 20,000 and dispatched them to Red Army units.¹³⁶ Of course, not all of this impressive number of men were volunteers. A German source indicates that analysis of partisan radio traffic in the summer of 1942 proved beyond any doubt that the partisans used force and intimidation for draft purposes in the Lugi, Velikopol’e and Bogoroditsk regions.¹³⁷

The partisans also employed formal medical examinations to select some Red Army conscripts. A German report contained an interesting account provided to them by a partisan who had been taken captive. The report stated:

About two weeks ago [middle of March 1942], the local mayor came to him and asked him to come to a building in the village. He was accompanied by an armed partisan. In the building ten men from his village, aged 16–44, collected. In the neighbouring village of Novo Andreevka, they came together with 40 other men from the surrounding area . . . In Dorogobuzh they were presented to a commission of regular officers who were wearing their insignia of rank. They were examined by a military doctor. A colonel was the highest ranking officer he saw sitting on the commission. The medical examination resulted in his release and that of 20 others who were found unfit for military service. These 21 men were sent off to their homes.¹³⁸

PARTISAN TRAINING

In general, however, there was no shortage of potential conscripts in partisan dominated areas. For example, S. V. Grishin was a former Red Army tank lieutenant who escaped from German encirclement in 1941 and later formed a partisan detachment in the Dorogobuzh region. He reported that, because of his inability to arm all available volunteers, on several occasions he had to send groups of 300–400 conscripts through enemy lines to join Red Army units.¹³⁹ However, the effective training of these conscripts remained an acute problem for partisan commands. In general, the training level of partisans was far lower than that of regular Red Army personnel. As one source pointed out:

Nevertheless, achieving reasonable combat worthiness in the partisan units remained a problem to the end. The large contingent of inexperienced officers and high percentage of low-calibre recruits posed a constant danger to the movement of sinking into various kinds of erratic activity, losing its military usefulness, and, possibly, becoming a political liability.¹⁴⁰

This applied in particular to the training of command and staff personnel and key specialists such as radio operators and demolition

men. Consequently, beginning in early 1942 the Red Army sent men trained in these specialities to partisan units by air. In fact, a steady stream of regular Red Army soldiers were flown to partisan units to maintain or increase their combat effectiveness, discipline, and reliability. Many of these junior commanders and specialists had, of course, been ideologically indoctrinated as real Communists. In January 1942 a special directive of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) activated three new schools to support the training of new partisan personnel. One of these schools specialised in the political indoctrination of personnel for the partisan detachments and underground Party cells. A second trained command personnel and demolitions experts, and a third trained radio operators.¹⁴¹ In 1941 in the Ukraine, special partisan schools in Kiev, Khar'kov, Poltava, and some other locations trained about 4,500 specialists in partisan and underground activities.¹⁴²

The job of training partisan-specialists was no mean task. Training was often vigorous and extensive since each partisan fighter had to master a variety of functional areas such as engineers' and sappers' work, infantry tactics, communications techniques, and supply methods. He had to be able to procure arms and food for himself, both locally and from the Germans. Command expertise on the part of partisan commanders was also essential. They had to maintain liaison with Red Army units and neighbouring partisan formations, they were responsible for selecting the most vulnerable targets, divining the Nazi command's intentions, and recruiting intelligence agents. Finally, partisan commanders faced the ever-challenging task of maintaining unit and personnel morale and discipline, a formidable job even in regular army units. In most cases, however, the new schools did a good job training partisan personnel. Where they failed, on-the-job training usually succeeded, and those that survived performed, largely because they had to.

Despite these training efforts, Western sources often deride the capabilities of partisan commanders. For example, Macksey provided a distinctly unflattering and clearly stereotyped description of a typical partisan commander:

The selection of the head of the local movement was, of course, crucial. The man chosen – a former chief of the Cheka (the agency used for counter-revolutionary activities within the Soviet Union) – was the epitome of a guerrilla chieftain. Saenko was 51 years of

age in 1941 and, despite excessive drinking, described as, 'physically strong and in good health, about 5 feet 8 inches tall, broad shouldered, brutal and tough. His little eyes of indefinite colour under a projected forehead were very characteristic. His face revealed . . . inexorable cruelty and obstinacy in obtaining his arms.'¹⁴³

On the other hand, E. Ziemke recognised the close attention Soviet authorities paid to partisan warfare and stressed the effectiveness of partisan training in the Soviet rear. Casting off any stereotypes, he wrote:

Early in the war an extensive partisan training programme was launched on the Soviet side of the front. It proved particularly valuable in the crucial 1941–42 period. By mid-1942 there were fifteen training centres located in the vicinity of Voronezh alone. Others were established at Voroshilovgrad and Rostov, and those at Moscow, Leningrad, and Stalingrad were among the largest. These schools trained partisans and diversionists who were to carry out special sabotage and espionage missions, provide the nuclei for new partisan units, or take over the leadership of existing detachments. For this type of training Communists and Komsomols were preferred, but Party affiliation, except in courses for leaders, was not mandatory.¹⁴⁴

As a result of these measures, by late 1942 every Soviet partisan brigade possessed some partisan personnel or Red Army officers who had been trained in the Soviet rear.¹⁴⁵

The Red Army frequently assigned its officers and non-commissioned officers as training cadres for partisan formations and units. The presence of regulars in partisan forces was important because they made training more professional, strengthened unit combat readiness and cohesion, and placed training under control of the Red Army. Further, the Red Army assigned many technicians, doctors, nurses, and reconnaissance specialists to partisan forces for a specific period of time before replacing them with fresh personnel. Rotation of Red Army personnel in partisan forces during 1941 and 1942 was carried out mainly through the gaps in the front line or by infiltration through German defences. Beginning in the summer of 1942, the Soviet increasingly effected personnel rotation by air.¹⁴⁶ By this time, all of the partisan areas had at least one and often several airfields.¹⁴⁷

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THE PARTISAN AIR COURIER SERVICE

Higher-level Red Army headquarters used the airfields to dispatch couriers to partisan commands. These couriers carried orders and directives to the partisans and returned with combat reports and intelligence information. Official US post-war assessments of Soviet partisan warfare accorded great importance to this courier service, stating:

The courier service apparently began to function early in summer 1942 and continued throughout the war. In general, courier planes flew between army group headquarters on the Soviet side of the line and the major area of partisan activity. There is evidence of such courier flights to the Yelnya area, the Bryansk area, the eastern part of Byelorussia, the Crimea and the partisan centres south of Lake Ilmen. Although little is known about how this system functioned, it appears that, at least for the major partisan areas, it provided a dependable and regular means of sending orders which for some reasons could not be transmitted by radio.¹⁴⁸

The highest density of Soviet supply and air courier flights took place in the rear area of German Army Group Centre, although the Soviets used flights in other regions such as Demiansk, and most of the flights took place at night. In early 1942 the Germans recorded as many as 150 air entries per night by aircraft that either dropped their cargo by parachute or landed on airfields in major partisan zones.¹⁴⁹

Often Soviet commands used aircraft to ferry successful partisans from partisan regions to rest areas behind the front line for rehabilitation and to receive decorations. Conversely, senior officers and political officers flew into partisan regions on brief visits designed to strengthen partisan morale in general, to pass particularly important orders, and to decorate especially deserving partisan fighters. At the same time, the aircraft usually also transported mail for the soldiers and psychological warfare and morale boosting materials such as leaflets, pamphlets, political writings, and propaganda movies. As in all military units, mail delivery was particularly important for the maintenance of morale since most partisans had families and relatives in the Soviet rear area. The Red Army postal service was responsible for this function and did it relatively effectively given the remote location of the partisans, although, without any doubt, the mail was strictly censored.

On return flights supply transport aircraft served primarily as personnel carriers. Their usual cargo was wounded partisans, Soviet

prisoners of war who had escaped from German concentration camps, flying crews who had bailed out and reached the partisans, important German prisoners who were taken to high Soviet headquarters for interrogation, and conscripts for the Red Army. During the German occupation of Belorussia, aircraft evacuated 12,000 men to the so-called 'Great Land' [*Bol'shaia zemlia*] (the Soviet rear area).¹⁵⁰

Reports to the Soviet High Command from subordinate *front* headquarters contained numerous references to and accounts of the exploits of partisan formations and their leaders. So also do reports in the German archives. For example, one such report dated 11 March 1942 contained the observations of a German informant in a partisan detachment led by Afanasyev, which operated in the rear area of Army Group Centre's Fourth Army. The report read:

In February Afanasyev, the detachment commander, presented activity and situation reports to General Belov at a conference in Dorogobuzh. He received from General Belov the order to mobilize the male population of his area and to send to Dorogobuzh those who had already served (in the Red Army), especially Red Army men in younger age groups. These people were to be sent there (to Dorogobuzh) with their weapons – rifles and light machine guns. From here these people were to be brought by plane to the Red Army. The airfield on which these planes land is two miles south of Dorogobuzh. Once a week a plane came and picked up 20 men. At this time these planes bring specially trained troops, in particular those who are to occupy leading positions (commanders).¹⁵¹

Although some Western historians have questioned the real effectiveness of the Red Air Force in its assistance to the Soviet partisans, in reality its help was quite substantial.¹⁵² Sheer statistical evidence demonstrates the immense scale and scope of the airlift effort. Overall during the war, aircraft airlifted into the partisan regions 16,000 tons of various types of cargo and transported 83,000 partisans, conscripts, and others in both directions. This involved a total of about 109,000 aircraft sorties.¹⁵³

The Soviets relied primarily on the small U2 aircraft for its air link to the partisans. The U2 was very manoeuvrable, it could fly quite low, and, hence, it could reach relatively inaccessible and dangerous areas close to the front. The U2 was especially suited to night missions because German night fighters could not readily detect it or shoot it down. Further, it could take off and land on the sort of very small and

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unimproved airstrips that abounded in partisan regions. In the winter the U2 was versatile enough to land in the snow using skis. The other type of aircraft the Red Air Force employed to provide partisan support was the American Douglas C-47, whose greater range and high carrying capacity was especially useful.¹⁵⁴ Occasionally, the Soviets also used modified TB-3 bombers, particularly to parachute drop supplies and paratroopers or other newer means of low-level cargo delivery such as low-level release of cargo sleds.

The former Party secretary of the Rudensk regional Party committee of the Minsk District, N. Pokrovsky, recalled a unique episode during which Soviet aviation rendered a great service to Soviet science. Since the German occupation began in summer 1941, two leading Belorussian scientists, N. Prilezaev, an academician of the Academy of Sciences of Soviet Belorussia, and I. Vetochin, a professor, lived in occupied Minsk. In the summer of 1943, a partisan messenger from Minsk contacted the commander of the 'Belarus' Partisan Brigade and informed him that both scientists wished to be evacuated from the city. To conduct this delicate operation, the partisans employed from the village of Oziaricheno in the Rudensk region a group of local collective farmers led by Leonid Cheibak, the chairman of the local collective farm. Cheibak loaded three carts from the collective farm with foodstuffs and started for the Minsk market. In Minsk he picked up the scientists, and, on their return trip, he delivered both them and their family members, and important scientific materials to the brigade. Soon, Soviet authorities airlifted the scientists to Moscow where they proceeded with their important research.¹⁵⁵

PARTISAN MEDICAL SUPPORT

One of the most painful problems the Soviet Partisan Movement confronted was the acquisition of required medical supplies, both in the partisan regions and beyond them. The situation was most acute during the first year of the war. At first, the partisans were able to use medicines, bandages, and other medical supplies left behind by Soviet military and civilian authorities. When these supplies ran out, they tried to seize medical supplies and bandages from German-controlled dispensaries and hospitals, but the available quantities were inadequate, and German security was too strong. The Germans allocated extremely limited quantities of medical supplies for the general civilian population and

strictly controlled what they did allocate by formal registration procedure. Therefore, partisans often resorted to ruses and threats against local personnel who worked in the German medical and dressing stations. Nor did partisan raids on German field hospitals produce quantities sufficient to satisfy requirements, although the captured booty was sometimes enormous. They also had problems procuring all types of surgical instruments. When war began the Soviet had stored these at scattered supply dumps in insufficient quantities. Given these critical shortages and the importance of medical support to partisan morale, the Soviets had to resort to airlift to supply the partisans' day-to-day needs for medical supplies and surgical instruments. Despite the shortage of medical material, most partisan units from company level and above had small medical sections.¹⁵⁶

Western sources often stress the primitive nature of partisan medicine, with good reason. For example, Macksey, whose attitude to Soviet partisans was most critical, insisted that the treatment of wounded partisan fighters who were not lucky enough to have been flown out to established hospitals in the Soviet rear area was primitive at best.¹⁵⁷ Indeed treatment was usually primitive and involved the use of only rudimentary medical techniques. However, despite these deficiencies the survival rate among sick and wounded partisans seemed to be high. In addition, the most seriously wounded partisans received treatment at special partisan field hospitals, which did have required surgical instruments. For example, while analysing the activity of the Soviet guerrillas in the El'nia–Dorogobuzh area in 1941–42, one Western analyst concluded that, in the western portion of this region alone, there were at least five such hospitals which could care for 10–25 partisans each.¹⁵⁸

FEEDING THE PARTISANS

Another major problem that the Soviet partisans faced throughout the war was obtaining necessary foodstuffs for both man and beast. One source correctly observed that partisan food shortages were so acute in the winter of 1941–42 that the survival of some partisan bands depended on their ability to solve the problem.¹⁵⁹

In general, three factors materially (and often adversely) affected the partisans' ability to procure food. First, to a great extent, the partisans depended on the local population's ability to share their foodstuffs with them. Second, the Nazi occupation authorities sought to exploit the

regions' resources for the benefit of their armies and the German population. Third, because of the invasion, the heavy fighting, and the policies of the occupation regime, areas under cultivation in the occupied regions were considerably reduced. For example, in Belorussia, areas under cultivation after the invasion composed only 57 per cent of the area under cultivation before the Nazi attack.¹⁶⁰ Thus, gross agricultural output after June 1941 was significantly less than it had been before the war. As a result, the indigenous population and partisans had to compete for food with the occupying Germans and survive on far less than they had before the war. Compounding this problem was the fact that, because of Soviet policies, since the Great October Revolution of 1917, food was never in abundant supply. Thus, from 1941 through 1944, the indigenous population in the occupied territories shouldered an immense burden. They had to feed themselves, they had to supply partisans who operated in their region and other partisan groups raiding from other regions, and they had to feed the occupying Germans.

Despite these problems, the partisans obtained their food primarily from the local population. However, there were other more risky ways by which the partisans obtained food. For example, V. Liventsev, the commander of the Bobruisk Partisan Brigade, elaborated on the methods he employed in a report to his higher headquarters:

We have to procure all foodstuffs on the spot using three sources: by seizing it from the Germans [in combat] and from collaborators and policemen who are requisitioning food from local people or producing it on their own plots of land; from peasants who voluntarily donate it; or by means of procurement. As a result of [our] propaganda among the indigenous population, the peasants have hidden food from the Germans, and this has enabled them to store substantial quantities both for themselves and for us. The peasants have always supported the partisans by assisting in any way possible.¹⁶¹

As far as 'donations' of food were concerned, these were not always voluntary. In many instances the partisans resorted to simple expropriations. Sometimes the partisans also stockpiled food supplies in centralised storage sites to ensure future supplies of food and fodder for their forces. In many partisan regions, it was common practice for the local population to provide foodstuffs to partisan stores on a regular basis. The partisans, in turn, would register the donation in the individual's name and provide him a special certificate (in essence, a receipt)

that indicated the type of food and quantity donated. In some cases, the partisans maintained these special registers collectively for individual villages, literally as village accounts. Sometimes, but very rarely, the partisans paid the peasants for the donated food in Germany currency that was circulating in the occupied territories.¹⁶²

On rare occasions the partisans were able to procure enough food to feed their own personnel and also to send quantities of foodstuff back to the Soviet rear area. This occurred in 1942 when the 'Surazh Gates' were open. On 12 April 1942, M. Shmyrev, the commander of the Surazh partisans, reported to Moscow that he had sent back 1,500 tons of cereals, 10,000 tons of potatoes, 35,000 tons of hay, 450 tons of oats, 2,000 horses, and 4,000 head of cattle.¹⁶³ Although most of this produce moved by land routes, Soviet authorities sometimes used aircraft to transport food to the rear area.¹⁶⁴

The partisans of Pskov and Novgorod Districts performed a noteworthy feat in this regard. In 1942 they were well aware of the desperate hunger of the population in encircled Leningrad, and they knew that thousands of citizens were dying of starvation. Therefore, they collected 48 tons of various foodstuffs, and, in March 1942, having loaded that precious cargo on 200 carts, with great difficulty and at considerable risk, they broke through the front line. This was one of the noblest acts performed during the critical stage of the German siege of the cradle of Bolshevik revolution, a siege that cost Leningrad 700,000 dead. The newspaper *Pravda* described this partisan action as a 'thrilling episode' in Russian history.¹⁶⁵

In addition to foodstuffs, the partisans often sent money collected from the local population to the Soviet rear to be used in the production of weapons.¹⁶⁶ After the partisan movement expanded and partisan formations became more numerous, Party structures and partisan commands jointly attempted to organise centralised food collection from the local population. On 14 August 1943, the Central Committee of the Belorussian Communist Party issued a directive entitled 'Concerning the Harvest of 1943'. This document instructed underground Party organisations and partisan leaders to treat the problem of procuring foodstuffs as a very serious one, whose fulfilment would greatly improve the efficiency of the entire partisan movement. Further, the document required Party functionaries to organise 'agitation' (propaganda) among the indigenous population of the occupied territories to encourage them to 'donate' more foodstuffs rather than resorting to forced expropriations, at least in the case of those individuals 'devoted to the Soviet

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system'. Specifically, the directive stated, 'It is necessary to explain to the people that those peasants who assist the partisans with bread will render a great service to the Motherland. As for bread produced on the German estates – you should indiscriminately confiscate it and give it to the partisans.'¹⁶⁷

THE EXPANSION OF THE PARTISAN MOVEMENT IN 1942

Red Army military successes in the winter of 1941–42 were of paramount importance for the expansion of the partisan warfare in the German rear area. Recognising this fact, Ziemke later wrote:

The first week of December 1941 marked the end of the 1941 phase of the partisan movement. In addition, it signalled a momentous change in the entire character of the war. The period of the great Soviet defeats came to an end, and, within two or three weeks, the German armies along the entire front were on the defensive. The Army Group Center was driven back from Moscow, in some places as much as 100 to 150 miles. The prestige of the Soviet regime and the Red Army rose, and the regime regained its equilibrium. These changes were immediately reflected in the partisan movement. Detachments which had totalled less than 100 men in November grew to 200 or 300 by January or February 1942 and, many of them, to 1,000 or more by the following summer. Soviet-trained organizers and cadres roamed the countryside recruiting new units.¹⁶⁸

Soviet sources confirm this reality. During the winter the number of guerrillas in Smolensk District had increased three-fold to a strength of 19,500 men. Partisan strength in the Briansk partisan region increased to 21,000 men, and another 28,000 partisans were operating in eastern Belorussia.¹⁶⁹ Exploiting their increased strength, in December 1941 and January 1942, the Briansk partisans routed German garrisons in such regional centres as Trubchevsk, Lokot', Zhukovka, and Suzemka and held on to these towns for various periods.¹⁷⁰ During the Battle for Moscow the partisans in the Russian Republic alone managed to destroy 2,000 German vehicles, about 200 tanks and armoured personnel carriers, 70 guns, 66 aircraft, 170 enemy depots, and more than 400 bridges, including 29 railway bridges.¹⁷¹

During this period one of the most productive and reliable partisan tactical techniques was the ambush. Given the fluid situation at the

front, numerous opportunities arose for partisans to conduct ambushes and short raids against fragmented withdrawing German forces. In turn these raids tended to sow panic and confusion in enemy ranks and sometimes led to heavy enemy personnel and equipment losses. The partisans usually established their ambushes at the edge of woods about 150–250 meters from an adjacent road along which Germans troop movements were expected. The open area between the woods and road facilitated concentration of all partisan firepower (usually rifles, machine guns and light mortars) against the German column. The ambushing force tried to catch the moving Germans in both oblique fire and cross fire. In addition, they often positioned two or three skilled grenade throwers on the flanks of the main ambush group with orders to hurl their grenades once the small arms fire had its effect on the column. To avoid detection by German security patrols, the partisans erected ambushes close to the roads and maintained absolute silence.

When the ambush commenced, partisan forces concentrated their fire on the enemy main column rather than his forward security units. Usually they simply permitted the security units to pass them by. If several partisan groups participated in an ambush, they were positioned at intervals of 500–700 metres apart, and they opened fire simultaneously on receipt of a signal of a single partisan detachment leader. As a rule, the partisan commander positioned himself in the middle of the partisan formation that was closest to the German main force. Sometimes, but particularly at night, the partisans attempted to ignite a struggle between two enemy columns, one against the other. To achieve this, they inserted small partisan groups between the two enemy columns with instructions to open fire simultaneously on both columns. In general, the most lucrative targets for effective partisan ambushes were German motorcycle riders, infantry transported on motor vehicles, or simply infantry on the march. Even small partisan groups could employ road ambushes effectively. They could inflict losses on the Germans disproportionate to their own strength or simply scatter the German columns, thus disrupting orderly German road movement at critical periods.

Once the ambush had ended, the partisans destroyed all heavy equipment abandoned by the enemy, especially enemy transport, but collected all enemy light weapons such as machine guns, rifles, hand grenades, and ammunition for their own future use.

The successful Soviet change of fortune during the Battle of Moscow bolstered popular morale among the population of the occupied Soviet

territories and was a critical factor in the subsequent growth of the partisan movement. Very simply, popular belief in the superior strength and invincibility of the German Army vanished. The Germans too understood this as well. For example, in February or March 1942, the commander of German Fourth Army's rear-area commander reported:

The Russian population no longer believes in the strength of our armed forces. It has experienced the retreat of our troops and sees now that we are no longer masters of the situation in the rear area . . . In the present situation it is easier for the partisans than [it was] last summer to win adherents, to draw the hesitant over to their side, and to induce those who fear a return of Bolsheviks to support their efforts.¹⁷²

The US and Great Britain also appreciated Soviet successes at Moscow in the winter of 1941–42. As a result, the two countries arranged for the shipment of arms, equipment, and other supplies to their new Soviet ally under the so-called 'Lend-Lease' programme. Some of this material also ultimately assisted the partisans. Britain and the US also established closer co-operation with the Soviet government in the intelligence realm. The American Office of Strategic Services (OSS) and Churchill's wartime intelligence organisation the Special Operations Executive (SOE) envisioned co-operative intelligence sharing and the conduct of co-ordinated clandestine operations against the Germans. To prepare plans for such co-operation, the NKVD sent a mission to London, and the SOE dispatched one to Moscow. This co-operation, which remained minimal throughout the war, did, however, produce some positive results. For example, one document indicates that the British and Soviet services shared information on partisan (guerrilla) operations. In 1942 British Colonel George Hill from the SOE was instrumental in helping the Soviets prepare a Soviet handbook on guerrilla warfare for the use of partisan commanders.¹⁷³ Soviet historiography, however, never mentioned this fact.

The American side was more reluctant to permit OSS co-operation with the NKVD. Although in 1943 the head of the OSS, William Donovan, travelled to Moscow to conduct preliminary discussions regarding the scope of co-operation, J. Edgar Hoover, the Director of the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), was very upset when he learned of the potential OSS–NKVD co-operative agreement. He is reported to have written to presidential adviser Harry Hopkins, 'I think

it is highly dangerous and a most undesirable procedure to establish in the United States a unit of the Russian secret service which has admittedly for its purpose the penetration into official secrets of various government agencies.¹⁷⁴

The Soviet government also tried to exploit the Red Army's new prestige after its victory at Moscow in its relations with many other countries, particularly to influence the political situation in the occupied countries of Eastern Europe. It did so, first and foremost, by dispatching Communist diversionary groups to these countries to stimulate indigenous partisan warfare. With this intent, in January 1942, a Soviet mission flew to Poland to persuade the Poles to form a workers party and to accelerate their operations against German forces.¹⁷⁵ As one source noted, these actions even reached as far afield as France. Thus:

The Communists [French], eager to take action, were held back by sheer lack of resources. Attempts by the British to fly Russian NKVD agents from Britain into France and Central Europe broke down in 1942. No matter how strong the French Communist ties were with Moscow (and the evidence of direct radio links is conflicting), they were almost entirely dependent upon SOE for supplies and support.¹⁷⁶

However, in the spring of 1942, the Soviet Partisan Movement was experiencing some problems, despite the heady Moscow victory. The partisan struggle did not go well in all regions, and in other regions the partisans suffered heavy losses from the intense winter fighting. Many partisan groups emerged from the fighting weakened and poorly armed and equipped. Even as late as autumn of 1942, only 50 per cent of partisan formations had radio communication with their parent headquarters.¹⁷⁷ Complicating the situation, the percentage of professional specialists such as demolition experts, radio operators, intelligence officers, and other key staff personnel remained low. More disturbing still, the total strength of the partisan movement appeared less than it had been during the height of winter in 1941–42. Official archival data on the numerical strength of the Soviet Partisan Movement in the spring of 1942 indicates that 88 partisan formations totalling 6,000 fighters were operating in German Army Group North's rear area and in Karelia. In addition, 251 formations numbering 56,000 men were in Army Group Centre's rear area, and another 152 formations numbering about 10,000 men, were in Army Group South's rear area. Thus, according to this data, the total strength of the Soviet Partisan Movement in spring

1942 was about 500 partisan formations containing about 72,000 fighters.¹⁷⁸

Therefore, from winter through spring of 1942, it appears as though the total number of partisans decreased by almost 20,000 men. Many Western historians have tended to attribute this reduction, at least in part, to mass desertions from the partisan detachments. For example, Macksey asserted:

Because the partisan lived in a state of constant flux and uncertainty, invariably under pressure and beset by doubts that were only momentarily assuaged by constructive action, the bands suffered badly from desertions . . . He would know there was as much a hidden menace from his comrades as from the enemy and that, in battle, he would encounter an opponent who was far better armed and trained than himself. In the summer his lot might be bearable but in winter it could be intolerable when the enemy drove him from shelter to die of exposure in the frozen wastes. Even if the small hierarchy survived, there was often, at best, decimation among lower ranks.¹⁷⁹

Other Western authorities on the Soviet Partisan Movement readily accepted this explanation for the precipitous fall in partisan strength but also added the factor of disease and illness.¹⁸⁰ Armstrong asserted that partisan defections grew when the Soviet control system was disrupted.¹⁸¹ Yet another scholar, Craig, cited the supposedly sizeable number of desertions from the Red Army's ranks during the German drive toward Stalingrad in the summer of 1942.¹⁸² Finally, without any reference to sources, Cooper claimed that the total number of Soviet partisans fighting in the spring of 1942 was only 30,000 men.¹⁸³

If, as these authors have claimed, the entire partisan movement shrank significantly during this period, there must have been valid reasons for it. Doubtless, the harsh conditions of partisan life, the rampant disease afflicting partisans, and real desires to desert were among the genuine causes. Sadly, no reliable sources have been released to document the latter, although they undoubtedly do exist, deep in the archives. Russian publications have studiously avoided mention of the problem so as not to compromise or in any way besmirch the memory of 'glorious sons and daughters of the Motherland'. Information that the Russian Central Archives maintains concerning desertions is far from complete, and what is available is simply fragmented. However, information kept in the Central Belorussian Archives on the Belorussian partisans, the numeri-

cally strongest Soviet partisan contingent, is more complete. This information includes the number of desertions in each of the first three years of partisan fighting. According to this data, 10 partisans deserted from Belorussian partisan forces in 1941, 187 in 1942, and 185 in 1943.¹⁸⁴ It should be borne in mind that these figures are archival ones that cannot be manipulated or falsified.

One of the reasons why these figures are so low may be the fault of the partisan commanders themselves, who simply may have not wanted to admit to themselves whatever the real state of affairs was in the field. Since each partisan leader was personally responsible for the discipline, morale, and political state of his subordinates, it may have been convenient for him to omit unpleasant data concerning deserters. If this were the case, the Belorussian Central Partisan Headquarters and the Central Headquarters of the Partisan Movement in Moscow would have recorded few deserters in their official records.

Regarding the issue of desertion, many partisan commanders were very vigilant and detained and severely punished any partisan who left camps without permission. Typical of this approach were the policies adopted by Sergei Vladimirovich Grishin, the commander of a Belorussian partisan detachment formed in December 1941. An order from Grishin read as follows, '13 October 1943. Squad leader Bacharev is to be shot for arbitrarily abandoning his position.'¹⁸⁵ Such orders regarding desertion were commonplace.

Conversely, desertions also frequently took place among Belorussians manning the German's auxiliary police force, a circumstance that often swelled the partisans' ranks. For example, a report presented to S. V. Grishin by one of his subordinate leaders declared, 'In the past two days we were joined by 41 deserter-policemen, 17 railway workers, 6 medical workers from Cherikov, and 19 escaped prisoners; a total of 83 men. People are arriving from all classes, but sorry to say, generally without weapons.'¹⁸⁶ Ziemke also described an episode concerning German units making up the *Osttruppen* [Eastern Troops], forces manned primarily by former Russian prisoners of war, mostly Cossacks, who had volunteered to fight on the Nazi side. In 1943 at the request of Georg von Kuechler, the commander of German Army Group North, 12 such battalions were transferred to Germany and France reportedly because instances had occurred when entire *Osttruppen* units had deserted to the partisans with their weapons and equipment.¹⁸⁷

By the spring of 1942, the Soviet political and military leadership appreciated the potential capabilities of partisan warfare and, hence,

began supplying partisan detachments more actively and with greater quantity of weapons and ammunition. The Western historian Alan Clark later correctly noted:

At the same time, the *Stavka* came to appreciate the military significance of the mass of men who were left behind the German advance and to take progressive measures to organize and encourage them. Trained 'agitators' were dropped by parachute, regional commands established, discipline reasserted, and wireless and explosives supplied. Within the space of a few months, the bands were thinking of themselves not as repudiated stragglers but as national heroes.¹⁸⁸

Events on the ground confirmed the fact that Soviet headquarters were indeed paying more attention to the partisan struggle. For example, in Belorussia during the first half of 1942, the North-western Operational Group of the Communist Party Central Committee alone managed to dispatch about 4,000 rifles, 630 sub-machine guns, 402 machine guns, 10,860 mines, 3,660,000 cartridges, and 40 tons of high explosives to the partisans.¹⁸⁹ Since early 1942 Red Army officers were regularly flown into partisan regions to reorganise partisan units and to command and staff ever-larger partisan formations.¹⁹⁰ These measures inevitably had the effect of strengthening and expanding the scope of partisan warfare in all German occupied territories. By the end of winter and the beginning of the spring of 1942, Soviet partisans controlled an enormous region comparable in area with Belgium, Holland, and Denmark combined.¹⁹¹ Possession of this region was especially important both psychologically and militarily at a time when the Red Army faced the awesome and still-forbidding task of driving the German forces from the Soviet Union. The questions were, 'Could the partisans retain these regions?', and if so, 'Could the Red Army prevail?'

Despite the apparent fall in partisan strength from late winter to spring 1942, from late spring the movement once again grew. The subsequent growth in the partisan movement overall resembled a rolling snowball whose inexorable growth directly affected ever greater proportions of the local population in the German occupied territories. Several Western observers have commented on this process.¹⁹² For example, Ziemke concluded, 'By the late summer of 1942 the partisan movement was solidly established. The organizational work had been completed, and the lines of control were firmly in Soviet hands.'¹⁹³

Many Soviet archival documents detail the growth of the partisan

movement during 1942. A whole host of new detachments and groups formed throughout the German rear area and soon many of these expanded into full partisan regiments or brigades. For example, in January 1942 a small partisan detachment commanded by Sergei Lazo formed in the El'nia region south-east of Smolensk. By spring Lazo's group had grown to a strength of 2,000 fighters as it operated in support of Group Belov in the rear of German Army Group Centre. By late spring the strength of Lazo's detachment justified its reorganisation into a full regiment. In the Ukraine, by May 1942 a detachment headed by the already well-known guerrilla fighter Sidor Kovpak increased its personnel strength tenfold to 720 men. Between December 1941 and February 1942, strenuous work by Kovpak's staff officers enabled the detachment to activate five new partisan formations with a combined strength of 1,500 men.¹⁹⁴ This precipitous growth in the strength and activity level of partisan units prompted members of the German General Staff to suggest that Hitler consider the use of poison gas as a possible remedy to deal with the growing partisan menace.¹⁹⁵

By the summer of 1942, the overall strength of the partisan movement had reached 125,000 fighters.¹⁹⁶ However, partisan forces were distributed unevenly throughout the German rear, and the network of partisan units in much of the Ukraine and southern Russia was still rather thin. Accordingly, Ziemke correctly noted:

Attempts by the Soviet authorities to stir up partisan activity in all German-occupied areas brought mixed success. Nearly nine-tenths of the partisan forces were located in the rear areas of Army Groups North and Centre with the greatest concentration behind Army Group Centre, particularly in the Bryansk Forest north and south of Bryansk and behind the great Soviet salient west of Toropets.¹⁹⁷

Moreover the number of fighters in each detachment still varied, depending on the availability of volunteers and the nature of the terrain.

By this time, as was the case with Red Army units, a detachment commander and political commissar shared the leadership of most partisan detachments. The favourite partisan tactic involved the employment of small task groups or sabotage squads to intercept German supply columns, to destroy railway bridges, to procure foodstuffs, or to attack other German installations. Normally, the most effective junior officers in the detachment headed these task groups and squads. By this time, partisan unit tactics had become somewhat more elaborate, and



1. German sign warning of presence of partisans (in German and Russian):

‘Warning! Danger! – Partisans!

The civil population as well as the military is strongly forbidden from appearing in region west of the Karachev–Reseta road. Anyone who appears in the restricted region will be shot.’

The office of the local Karachev Commandant



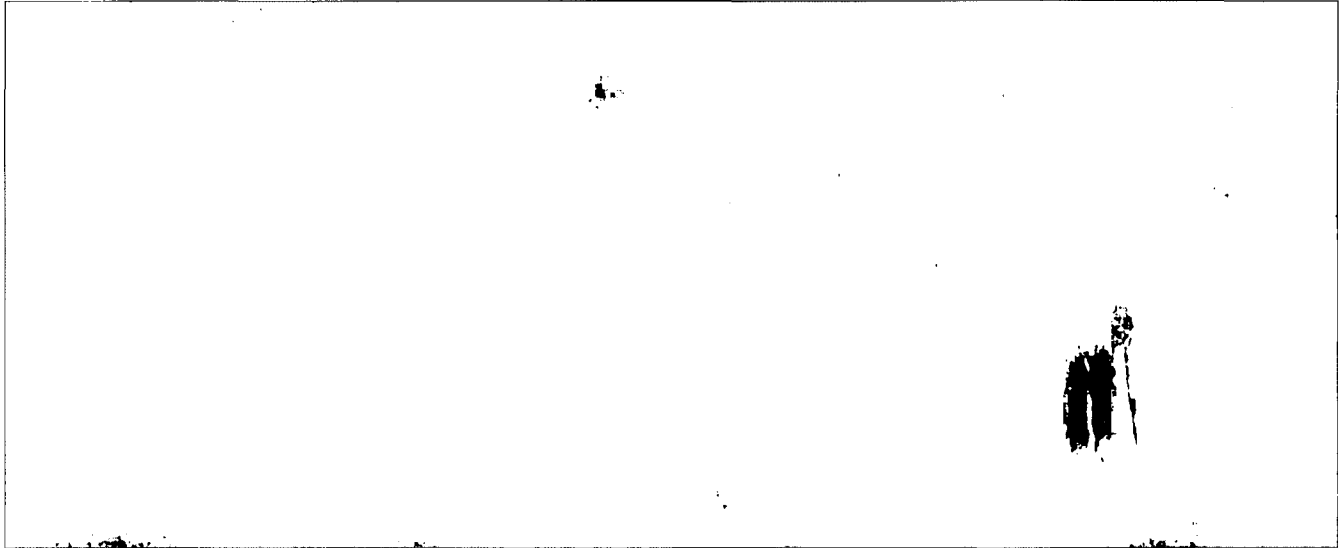
2. S. A. Kovpak, commander of a partisan formation



3. A partisan assembly



4. Partisans – young and old



5. Partisans on the march



6. Partisan women



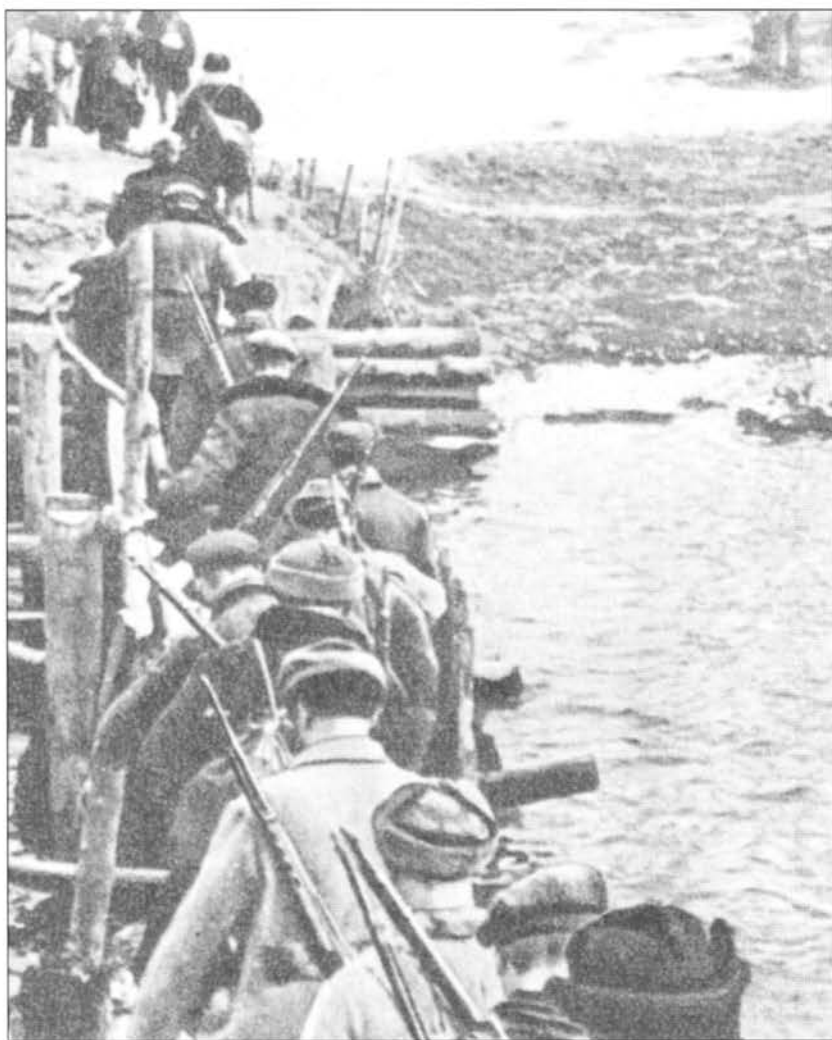
7. In a partisan camp



8. A partisan press



10. Partisans listen to the 'Voice of Moscow'



11. Partisans of the 2nd Kletnia Brigade on a combat mission, Orel region, 1943



12. Partisans laying a mine, Belorussia, 1943



13. Partisans returning from a combat mission, Pinks region, 1944



14. Lithuanian partisans show Soviet engineers location of a bridge mined by the Germans, 1944



15. Partisans of the 2nd Lettish Partisan Brigade assemble before departing on a combat mission, March 1944



16. P. K. Ponomarenko, Chief of the Partisan Movement

increased emphasis was placed on the attack. The cardinal rule was to exploit any and every opportunity for surprise or ambush and to design entire operations accordingly. When a target was chosen for attack, be it a motor pool, radio station, airfield, Nazi garrison, or any other sort of installation, the initial requirement was to conduct thorough reconnaissance of the objective. Partisans normally conducted reconnaissance 'on a map', but also used physical observation to determine information on enemy troop strength, the location of heavy weapons and vulnerable points, and the presence of guards and security outposts. Each partisan participating in the attack was provided with all the information necessary to perform his mission (and no more), and, as a rule, each task group was assigned one or several concealed approach routes to exploit the element of surprise to the utmost. Particular attention was devoted to detailed terrain study both on a map and, when feasible, on the ground itself. This was particularly important, since partisans attacked primarily at night and usually chose approach routes that traversed heavy woods, dense brush, and swamps.

The course of any attack depended largely on which side had the initiative. If the enemy had the initiative, the partisans tailored their actions to accord with their strength and immediate mission. When attacked by surprise, larger detachments usually stood and fought, but only if they thought their force was a match for the German force. In similar circumstances, smaller detachments or groups quickly retired, especially if they feared being surrounded. When trapped, partisan detachments had standing orders to attack repeatedly and violently in the hope of finding a weak point in the enemy line through which to force an escape. In this case, any inaction was itself a suicidal act.

Between the end of August and the beginning of September 1942, the Politburo of the Communist Party's Central Committee and the Central Headquarters of the Partisan Movement organised a series of meetings in Moscow for partisan and Party underground leaders. The main topic on the meeting's agenda was the further expansion of guerrilla warfare. As a result of the meeting, the Soviet High Command (Stavka) summoned senior partisan officers to Moscow so that they could receive an intensive course in partisan organisational and fighting techniques. These leaders then returned to their units by passing through the front lines. During these sessions Stalin met in the Kremlin with the Ukrainian partisan leader S. Kovpak and promoted him to the rank of General. On that occasion Stalin is reported to have remarked, 'The most important thing is to maintain stronger links with the people.'¹⁹⁸

During the summer of 1942, the logistical support of partisan forces drastically improved. For example, the five partisan brigades that were operating the North-western Front's sector (in Leningrad District) numbered a total of 3,700 men, and were equipped with a total of 2,800 rifles, 758 sub-machine guns, 169 machine guns, 85 mortars, 43 anti-tank rifles and four artillery pieces.¹⁹⁹ More important still, their weapons were predominantly Russian-made. It is true that they still possessed a certain percentage of captured German arms, but most weapons had been produced at Soviet plants. This fact contradicts the contention of many Western authors who claimed that the majority of weapons were of US or British manufacture.²⁰⁰ While this is not the place to discuss the role of Lend-Lease supplies to the Soviet Union during the Second World War, it is necessary to understand, as demonstrated by some Western sources, that most Lend-Lease equipment consisted of heavy weaponry such as tanks, aircraft, anti-aircraft guns, etc.²⁰¹ Nevertheless, several Western scholars have claimed that Soviet partisans were armed with American and British armament in addition to Soviet and German weapons. One stated bluntly, 'The equipment of the partisans was never standard. At the beginning of the Russian campaign, the clothing and arms of guerrillas were improvised. Later the partisans were able to get the latest and best equipment, some of it captured German material and the rest sent by the Americans and British.'²⁰² However, no evidence at all exists to support the claim that Soviet partisans were supplied or equipped with Allied weaponry.

At the same time, the senior Soviet political and military leadership undertook some measures related to the partisan movement that were clearly unnecessary, that harmed the partisan movement overall, and that, even now, are difficult to justify or explain. One of these measures was the appointment on 6 September 1942 of Marshal K. Voroshilov to be Supreme Commander of the entire Soviet Partisan Movement, including its Central Headquarters. However, several months later, in November 1942, his appointment was revoked, and Stalin himself, as Chairman of the State Defence Committee, personally assumed leadership of the partisan movement. Thereafter, the Central Headquarters of the Partisan Movement again became directly subordinate to the Stavka of the Supreme Command.²⁰³ Command changes such as these hindered the expansion of the partisan war and produced confusion in the higher echelons of the partisan movement. However, for rank-and-file partisan fighters, they passed virtually unnoticed since the partisans faced far more serious concerns.

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In most cases, the growing strength of partisan forces in the summer of 1942 stimulated a concurrent growth in their combat activity. German combat reports accurately reflected this growth. On the basis of such report, one post-war German assessment noted:

During the summer of 1942 the Russians made every effort to disrupt the German lines of communication. The scarce POL supplies destined for Army Group Centre – the operations in the south had priority – were jeopardized by partisan interference. The demolition squads of the Red Army auxiliaries had only improvised means at their disposal. An emergency combat method developed into a new nuisance arm. Small and very small liaison aircraft with air cooled engines, which had formed the only remnants of ready-for-action planes during the past winter, were used by the Russians to airlift sabotage detachments into rear areas.²⁰⁴

Another report recognised the increased professionalism displayed by partisan units, declaring, 'The leaders of the partisan units were mostly specially trained regular army men – even general staff officers.'²⁰⁵

Soviet documents substantiate this fact. Accordingly, between 15 June and 1 September 1942, partisans in the Kalinin District derailed 70 trains, destroyed 206 vehicles, blew up 120 railway and highway bridges, and put out of action 10 kilometres of telephone and telegraph lines.²⁰⁶ The Belorussian partisans intensified their activity, and from June to November 1942 they blew up 500 bridges and destroyed about 1,000 enemy vehicles.²⁰⁷ At the same general time, Ukrainian partisans derailed 233 enemy trains and destroyed or damaged 39 kilometres of wire communication lines.²⁰⁸

The deteriorating state of affairs in the German rear area prompted Hitler to sign his Directive No. 46 on 18 August 1942. This Directive, which many Western and Russian historians often quote as proof of the growth of partisan activity in the Nazi rear, began by stating, 'The bands in the East have become an unbearable menace during the last few months and are seriously threatening the supply lines to the front'.²⁰⁹ The Fuehrer went on to order that the partisans be rooted out before the winter of 1942–43. To this end, he ordered the Chief of Staff of the OKH (the German Army High Command, which controlled operations in the East) to intensify its conduct of anti-partisan warfare in occupied territories. He also insisted that elements of the German Replacement Army be transferred to the East for use as anti-partisan forces while they

completed their military training.²¹⁰ In addition, Hitler granted increased authority to the SS and police to counter the growing partisan threat by harsh treatment of both the partisans and the indigenous population of the occupied territories.

As a rule, partisan formations expanded around the nucleus of already active and strong partisan units commanded by the most experienced, skilled, and audacious leaders. This included the large formations commanded by such renowned partisan chiefs as A. Saburov, A. Fedorov, S. Kovpak, V. Kazubsky, S. Grishin, and many others. This process of expansion was beneficial for the movement as a whole, and it represented a transition from the older, poorly co-ordinated stage of partisan warfare to a newer stage characterised by far more sophisticated command and control and far more effective operations. Partisan unit organisational structures matured, and co-operation between the partisan units themselves and between partisan formations and large Red Army units become more effective. On the other hand, command and control of these larger partisan formations continued to pose problems, and the larger formations did not always effectively exploit their increased strength to the maximum.

In summary, the summer of 1942 was a key formative stage in the further development of large scale partisan war. While the movement grew in strength, it faced many organisational problems arising from the increased density of formations and Party underground cells. And, admittedly, many thousands of partisans and local inhabitants fell victim to this expanded partisan warfare. However, owing to the strenuous efforts of the Soviet High Command and its subordinate Red army formations, partisan leaders and their rank and file, and Party underground leaders and rank and file operating in the occupied territory, the partisan effort grew. The number and strength of partisan formations increased dramatically in comparison with the summer and autumn of 1941, and Soviet authorities overcame many of their persistent problems, particularly regarding the supply of partisans with weapons and ammunition. Most important, partisan combat activity sharply rose.

Many Western specialists argue that before the Battle for Stalingrad, partisan activity played an insignificant role in the war.²¹¹ It is undoubtedly correct that far more German soldiers fell victim to the Red Army than to the partisans (as Macksey correctly argues). Regarding German casualties, by the early spring of 1942, the Germans had lost 1,005,636 men or 31 per cent of their entire force in the fighting on the Soviet–German front. This did not include the heavy losses sustained by the

Hungarians, Rumanians, and Italians who fought beside the Germans, primarily in southern Russia.²¹² Of these German allies, at least 202,250 were killed, and almost 50,000 were missing in action.²¹³ While some of these killed, wounded, or missing were lost due to partisan actions, the true impact of the partisan struggle must be measured in less tangible ways than by simply tallying up the number of Germans killed and wounded. While difficult to measure precisely, partisan warfare exacted a real toll on German faith in their invincibility. While gnawing away at the German rear area, partisan warfare also eroded German morale and their will to prevail in a war whose ferocity exceeded their wildest imagination.

Joseph Goebbels, the German Propaganda Minister, was concerned enough about the increased partisan threat to mention it in an entry he recorded in his diary at the end of the winter of 1941–42.²¹⁴ In April 1942, Colonel M. Schenkendorf, the chief of Nazi security forces in the rear area of the Army Group Centre, requested more troops to conduct anti-partisan operations in his sector. He stated that, by the spring of 1942, the Soviet partisan bands had become more powerful, better trained, and better armed and equipped. Sometimes, he noted, they even employed artillery to achieve their goals, as was the case in partisan attacks against German objectives near El'nia and Briansk.²¹⁵

Even US President Franklin Roosevelt paid special attention to the Soviet partisan activity. A transcript of a May 1942 conversation between Roosevelt and Molotov, the Soviet Foreign Minister, included this exchange regarding partisan operations:

To a question by the President regarding guerrilla operations, Mr Molotov replied that the partisans were most active in the Moscow–Smolensk–Mozhaisk (Dorogobuzh) sector. They numbered 9,000 irregulars and parts of 2–3 cavalry divisions under General Belov. They were in absolute control of an egg-shaped area measuring some 60 kilometres east and west by 20–30 kilometres north and south. They were, however, less conspicuous in other areas.²¹⁶

Another Western analyst noted that, with the coming of the summer of 1942 and the Nazi drive to Stalingrad, the activity of the guerrilla units has increased, 'in far greater proportion than has the number of deserters'.²¹⁷ The growth in the strength of the Soviet Partisan Movement and German inability to cope with partisan units in their rear forced the German High Command to co-ordinate their anti-partisan

operations. In December 1942 it appointed SS Obergruppenführer Erich von dem Bach-Zelewski, who was the senior SS and police leader in Army Group Centre's rear area since June 1941, as the chief of anti-partisan forces. Although Bach-Zelewski was directly responsible to the German SS chief Heinrich Himmler, he was subordinate to the Wehrmacht for his planning of anti-partisan operations.²¹⁸ From this time on, the German Army was responsible for maintaining a partisan free zone 40 kilometres to the rear of the front lines.²¹⁹ The army also began publishing a special monthly paper entitled *Nachrichten über den Bandenkrieg* [News about the Partisan War] that published translations of partisan documents and summarised intelligence information concerning partisan tactics.²²⁰

The intangible effects of partisan war were even more telling. The growth of the partisan struggle and its increasingly measurable successes had an exceptionally important psychological impact on the course of war overall. First of all, it raised the morale of many millions of Soviet people who lived in the enemy rear area. This, in turn, further fuelled the flames of the partisan war. On the other hand, successful partisan activity had a clearly demoralising effect on German leaders and soldiers alike. The effect was more than just psychological. Beyond the simple calculation of material losses inflicted by partisan operations, German soldiers and their units simply could not feel completely secure either at the front or in their rest areas during periods of combat inactivity. Often, therefore, while planning the transport of material to and from the front or while moving units from one area to another, German commands had to consider whether a highway or a railroad traversed territories controlled by the partisans. German troops developed a mortal fear of the Soviet partisans. Rumours of torture by partisans combined with almost instinctive dread of the cruel Russian winter conditions and the supposed savagery of combat in Russia led some German soldiers to commit suicide rather than report to stations or units in the East.²²¹

These gloomy and often terrifying impressions of the war on the Soviet–German front that literally permeated German personnel ranks were reinforced by frequent reminders about partisan activities contained in operational and administrative orders and vivid stories about partisan attacks propagated among German servicemen. All of this information, whether real or apocryphal, inevitably undermined soldiers' morale throughout the German Army. This fact alone attested to the effectiveness of Soviet partisan warfare.

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NOTES

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5

Partisans' Efforts to Disrupt the German Communication Network (1943–44)

After stubborn fighting between the Soviet and German armies in the winter of 1942–43, in the spring of 1943, a relative lull set in across the Soviet–German front. Both sides were assessing the impact of previous battles and preparing plans for further decisive operations. Both sides re-supplied their forces with men and material, and they regrouped their forces to meet future plans and eventualities. Both sides concentrated on increasing their weapons production and searched for new weapons systems that could tip the balance in their favour.

The Soviet defeat and utter destruction of vaunted German Sixth Army and the better part of Fourth Panzer Army at Stalingrad prompted Soviet morale and hopes to soar. Never before had the Germans suffered so devastating a defeat. They had failed to take Stalingrad after their spectacular advance across southern Russia in summer 1942. Worse, together with their allies they had lost between three and four armies in the process. Nor had the Germans taken any of their major objectives in either 1941 or 1942. Moscow, Leningrad, and the Caucasus oilfields were still firmly in Soviet hands. In addition to staving off seemingly imminent disasters and then inflicting grievous blows on the Wehrmacht, Soviet lifelines to Britain's and the United States' arsenals remained open, and the steady flow of Lend-Lease supplies grew by the month. For the second time since the Germans launched Operation 'Barbarossa', in early 1943, their armies in the Soviet Union were in full retreat, this time in southern Russia.

One of the by-products of these notable Soviet victories and improved civilian morale was a wholesale growth in Soviet industrial production. The gross industrial output of the Soviet Union in 1943 was 17 per cent higher than that in 1942. The production of aircraft increased by 37.1

per cent and reached 34,900 airframes; tank production matched the levels of 1942 and comprised 24,100 tanks; and the production of artillery pieces increased 2.5 per cent to a total of 130,300 tubes.¹

After surviving the harrowing first period of war, the Stavka set about reorganising its forces based on its extensive war experiences. The Soviet General Staff adopted a new corps organisation of its rifle forces, ostensibly to improve troop command and control in combat. The General Staff activated larger artillery formations, including artillery divisions and artillery penetration divisions and corps, and placed them under the control of the Reserve of the High Command (*RVGK* or *RGK*). Larger tank formations, in the form of tank armies possessed vastly enhanced stock capabilities and high manoeuvrability in fluid combat situations.²

All these changes in the Soviet economic and military spheres were clearly positive ones. Collectively, they placed the Red Army in a far more favourable position than it had been in during the first period of the war. Nor were improvements limited only to regular forces. The Soviet Partisan Movement expanded and matured in parallel fashion, in part, a by-product of the Soviet's improved military posture and, in part, due to recent German defeats and soaring public morale. A Western source cited German statistics to underscore the magnitude of their problem. According to German estimates, in August 1941, 10 per cent of the Nazi rear area was infested with Soviet partisans. By October 1942 this figure had risen to 75 per cent, and by the autumn of the same year, fully 10 per cent of all German field divisions in Russia were engaged in fighting partisans.³

THE SITUATION IN SUMMER 1943

In an attempt to exploit the unique configuration of the Soviet–German front, in the spring of 1943, the German High Command decided to attack the Kursk Bulge, a large salient around the city of Kursk that jutted nearly 200 kilometres westward into the German strategic defence line. It would do so from salients of its own around Orel and Belgorod, positions that it had held at heavy cost during the intense winter fighting. The Germans reasoned that such an offensive could cut off and liquidate large Soviet forces in the bulge and restore to them both offensive momentum and the strategic initiative. Accordingly, the German High Command ordered its Army Group Centre to penetrate

Soviet positions along the northern flank of the salient and its Army Group South to do the same against the salient's southern flank. The two attacking forces would then encircle and destroy defending Soviet Central and Voronezh Front forces. To fulfil this ambitious mission, the Germans assembled and concentrated 50 divisions (including 16 tank and motorised) numbering 900,000 men, about 10,000 artillery pieces and mortars, 2,700 tanks and assault guns, and more than 2,000 aircraft.⁴

To stave off the anticipated German assault and thwart German strategic plans, the Soviet High Command chose to stand and fight at Kursk. To do so effectively, however, they had to organise an impenetrable defence system, a feat that they had never before performed. The defence had to be deeply echeloned and resilient enough to halt the massed German armour, which experience clearly showed the Germans would employ to spearhead their assault.

One of the most serious German military problems in 1943, as had been the case to a lesser extent in 1942, was their growing manpower shortage.⁵ At least in part, this shortage was directly related to the increased activity of the Soviet Partisan Movement. The German command simply could not activate as many security units as was necessary to provide reliable security for their communications routes in the rear area. For example, in 1943 and 1944, the total strength of German security forces varied from 200,000 to 250,000 men.⁶ This, in itself, was a tremendous drain on German manpower resources. Worse still, in March 1943 the German Field Army in the East was 700,000 men below establishment requirements.⁷ It is true, however, that allied contributions to the war effort compensated to a degree for the German shortfall. By the winter of 1942/43, for example, Germany's allies, primarily Italy, Hungary, and Rumania, fielded 48 divisions in the East (including one Spanish and one Slovakian division), which numbered 648,000 men.⁸ The Finnish Army, which operated independently against Soviet forces in the Leningrad region and Karelia, counted 17 divisions and brigades with about 400,000 men.⁹

Nor was morale in Berlin very high in the spring of 1943. In the wake of the German disaster at Stalingrad, it became clear to Hitler that clear military victory over the Soviet Union was impossible to achieve. Nevertheless, Hitler was resolute in his wish to conduct one more massive offensive. At the same time, the Fuehrer also attempted to split the Allied coalition by diplomatic intrigues. With this in mind, in the summer of 1943, Nazi agents approached Soviet representatives in

Stockholm and proposed a separate peace with Moscow.¹⁰ The Germans made the same approach to the US and Great Britain. In reality, these Nazi initiatives did achieve some positive results, since rumours of a possible peace with Germany irritated the leaders of the Great Alliance. In Moscow, for example, these rumours seemed to be corroborated by the absence of a 'second front', the Allied landing in Europe that the Western Allies had promised Stalin they would conduct since early 1942. Therefore, in the diplomatic arena, the first half of 1943 was characterised by serious Western–Soviet tensions. However, these tensions lessened somewhat after the 'Big Three' foreign ministers, Hull, Eden and Molotov, met in Quebec in August 1943, and their leaders, Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin, assembled at Teheran in November–December 1943.¹¹

Unlike the situation in spring 1942, when the Soviet Union had begun the fighting season with a major intelligence blunder, in spring 1943 the Stavka correctly assessed the strategic situation. Based upon superb intelligence information, it decided to first weaken German forces by repelling their attacks on the Kursk Bulge and then to launch a decisive offensive of their own. The ensuing Soviet operational plan envisioned the defeat of Germans forces at Kursk and the subsequent liberation of the Left Bank of the Ukraine, the Donbas, and the eastern regions of Belorussia. By the end of the offensive, Soviet forces would reach Smolensk and the Sozh and Dnepr Rivers.¹² To accomplish these feats, the Soviet High Command assembled an immense force at Kursk. The Central and Voronezh Fronts alone numbered 1,336,000 men, supported by 19,100 artillery pieces and mortars, 3,444 tanks and self-propelled guns, and 2,900 aircraft.¹³ Thus, the Red Army possessed marked numerical superiority over the Germans. More important still, the Soviet command shrewdly delayed its offensive actions until the Germans had committed most of their armour force.

PARTISANS MISSIONS IN 1943

During this period the Stavka adjusted the missions it assigned to the partisans to accord with the changing situation. In short, while performing their time-honoured missions, partisans were expected to tailor those missions to support a more offensive-oriented Red Army. This required even greater emphasis on the disruption of enemy lines of communication and the movement of critical enemy reserves. All the while, parti-

sans continued their activities to sap the strength of German forces by continuing to destroy both men and material.

The 30 May 1942 Directive of the State Defence Committee, which had officially activated the Central Headquarters of the Partisan Movement, had also defined the partisans' premier missions. These included the destruction of the enemy communication network by attacks on bridges and enemy vehicular columns and the disruption of enemy communications by attacks on telephone, telegraph, and radio stations.¹⁴ All of this reflected the Soviet desire to use sabotage and direct attacks to hinder the forward movement of German units and supplies. By early 1943 the Soviets focused these measures on disrupting German rail traffic since this was the primary means by which the Germans moved critical strategic and operational reserves. Beginning in 1943, the partisans began conducting concerted operations on an ever-larger scale against German rail traffic. To an increasing extent, they conducted these operations in support of specific Red Army operations. Indicative of the unprecedented scale of these efforts, some partisan anti-rail operations had specific code-names.

The most effective means by which partisans could disrupt rail and road transport was to destroy bridges by undermining or burning them or by blowing them up to cause the derailment of troop or supply trains. The most expedient method for doing so was to place pyro-technical and explosive materials under bridges and the rails themselves. Once the trains halted, partisans would engage them and the personnel they were carrying with machine gun and rifle fire and hand grenades. As a rule, the fulfilment of these missions fell to small groups of demolition experts that normally numbered from three to four men. These groups, operating jointly, often struck the rail lines in several sectors so as to make the task of repairing the lines more difficult. The demolition groups were accompanied and protected by security groups armed with rifles and hand grenades whose task was to protect the demolition men and pin down and distract enemy railroad guards. The partisans chose derailment locations predominantly near steep downgrades where the trains were moving at high speed and where it was difficult for them to stop. Sometimes, the partisans removed loosened rails from the roadbed just as the train approached so that the engineer would not notice the damaged stretch of track. Usually, the three or four men who sat in ambush did this rather primitively by simply tying strong rope or telegraph wire to the rails and pulling them away at the very last moment. The partisans obtained the necessary wire by tearing down

German communications lines. If the railroad was double track, it was sufficient to derail only a single train since that would likely block both tracks. Simultaneously, the partisan demolition groups also destroyed enemy communications lines, which customarily ran parallel to the rail lines. They did so simply by cutting the wires after sawing down the poles. The partisans well understood that the more poles they cut down, the more difficult it would be to repair. After completing these tasks, the partisan groups participating in any operation would rendezvous at a location determined in advance by the partisan detachment's chief of staff or commander.

In general, one can conclude that, after mid-1942, the partisans zealously performed the task of disrupting the enemy communication network. Moreover, ample data from all front sectors confirms that the damage they inflicted was considerable. Official Soviet data indicates that, from May through November 1942, partisans in the Leningrad region succeeded in derailing 212 enemy trains. In spring and summer of the same year, partisans in the Kalinin region derailed 78 trains, set one fuel train on fire, blew up 188 railway and highway bridges, destroyed 206 enemy military cargo trucks, and demolished 10 kilometres of wire line and 80 kilometres of permanent railroad bed.¹⁵ Between June and October 1942, the Smolensk partisans derailed more than 300 trains and blew up 145 bridges. During the same period, the Briansk partisans derailed 226 trains and destroyed 51 kilometres of permanent railroad bed in their sector. Because of their activities, the Briansk–L'gov railway line was inoperable for 21 days during September and October 1942.¹⁶ In this respect, the partisans in Belorussia were particularly productive. From June to November 1942, they derailed an estimated 800 trains, blew up about 500 bridges, and destroyed about 1,000 enemy vehicles. During all of 1942, Ukrainian partisans derailed 233 trains, blew up 62 bridges, and destroyed 39 kilometres of wire lines.¹⁷

This frenzied partisan activity against German rail traffic had considerable effect on German operational capabilities. For example, when describing the partisans' contribution to the Soviet victory at Stalingrad, A. Werth has written, 'There is no doubt that by the autumn and winter of 1942 the partisans played an important part in wrecking the long lines of German communication to the Stalingrad area; we know, for instance, that the Manstein offensive of 12 December had been delayed by the slowness – caused by partisan action – with which military supplies were reaching the Don country'.¹⁸ In fact, if the Germans had been able to begin their relief operations from the Kotel'nikov region earlier than

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they did, they might have had a better chance to break thorough and rescue General Paulus' German Sixth Army at Stalingrad.

THE EXPANSION OF THE PARTISAN MOVEMENT

In 1943 the Soviet Partisan Movement grew significantly in strength and redoubled its operational efforts. Throughout the year, according to both Western and Soviet sources, the movement increased in strength from 130,000 to as many as 250,000 fighters.¹⁹ Ziemke later wrote, 'In 1943 and 1944, the Soviet Partisan Movement was firmly established. Its strength had levelled off at about 250,000 men, but its influence on the lives and attitudes of millions in occupied territory from the Pripiat' Marshes north grew as the German prospects for victory dimmed'.²⁰ Another source noted, 'In 1943 partisan warfare became a mass effort'.²¹ Yet another authority attempted to articulate those factors that influenced the growth of the Soviet Partisan Movement, which he defined as follows:

- (1) German treatment of the civilian population and especially their recruiting methods for '*Ostarbeiter*' [Eastern workers];
- (2) German exploitation of the peasantry;
- (3) German 'double crossing' of native nationalities;
- (4) The stiffening Soviet resistance along the entire front;
- (5) Soviet material assistance to the partisans; and
- (6) German inability to liquidate partisan pockets of resistance and their liberal application of brutal force and terror in their attempts to do so.²²

However, not all authors recognised the sharp growth in partisan strength during this period. For example, one argued that, since the Party did not want a mass partisan movement to exist, the partisan movement could not have been as strong as others claimed.²³

In actuality, these estimates of partisan strength may be low, given the tremendous turbulence in partisan ranks. Estimates based on the most recent Russia archival releases indicate that total partisan strength may have reached 550,000 men if personnel turnover is considered.²⁴ This was so because thousands of partisans were killed in combat operations and during German anti-partisan campaigns and operations, and old partisan units were being disbanded and new ones activated in continuous fashion. This new figure approximates closely to some Western

sources that placed partisan strength at 500,000 men throughout the entire period of German occupation.²⁵

The new Russian estimates also include citizens of other countries who fought in Soviet partisan units. For example, in 1943 some partisan detachments even included separate units consisting of Poles, Hungarians, and citizens of other nationalities. Some Rumanians fought in partisan formations in the Crimea and the Ukraine, and 700 Hungarians enlisted in Belorussian and Ukrainian partisan formations.²⁶ Some 360 Yugoslavians are also recorded as having served in these partisan formations.²⁷ However, the most numerous group of non-Russians serving in partisan formations were the Poles. For example, on 15 August 1943, a large Polish partisan unit that consisted of three subordinate detachments formed in the Belorussian region of Pinsk.²⁸

Generally speaking, after early 1943 the scale and intensity of partisan fighting was inexorably bound up with the fortunes of war at the front. The indigenous populations of German-occupied territories joined the partisan effort in direct proportion to the degree of Soviet military successes and German combat reverses. Accordingly, the Soviet victory at Stalingrad swelled partisan ranks. During the period from January to April 1943, the strength of the Ukrainian partisan movement increased by 2.5 times, and the strength of the Belorussian partisan movement doubled between January and November 1943.²⁹ During the same period, the partisan reserve, meaning potential fighters who were partially trained but due to shortage of weapons were unarmed and lived mainly in villages in the occupied territory, grew to about half a million men.³⁰ The most powerful partisan formations were located in Belorussia and the Ukraine. Collectively, they made up about 90 per cent of the entire Soviet partisan force.³¹ Soviet sources indicate that the number of partisans in Belorussia grew in 1943 from 65,000 in February, to 100,000 in June, to 245,000 in October, and to 360,000 in December.³² While the figures for October and December are clearly exaggerated, it is certain that strength figures did grow, and significantly so.

Debates still rage over real partisan strength in 1943 and thereafter, at least in part due to the Soviet propensity for exaggeration. For example, Cooper strenuously objects to the official Russian figures and calls them a 'ludicrous exaggeration which probably includes the unarmed partisan reserve and the irregular units parachuted or infiltrated behind the German front line'.³³ Others agree with him to varying degrees. Therefore, it would be useful to present and evaluate the existing data on this controversial matter.

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Current Russian sources are based on official reports maintained during wartime by the Operational Division of the Central Headquarters of the Partisan Movement, which are now located in the state archives. While these figures represent the number of partisans formally enrolled in regular partisan combat units, there were many other fighters who operated in the German rear. These were members of diversionary teams, demolition teams, and destruction groups subordinate to the NKVD, *fronts*, armies, and lower-level Red Army formations and units, who, although they were often in contact with partisan detachments, generally operated independently. Thus, the total number of Soviet fighters engaged in partisan-type warfare was somewhat higher than the official figures contained in official CHQPM documents. Another reality affected the strength reports of partisan units. For example, partisan leaders sometimes exaggerated the damage they did to the enemy. This was so because partisan activity had its own rewards. Many partisan commanders became glamorous war heroes in the eyes of Soviet newspapers, radio, and other information and propaganda media. However, there was no incentive for commanders to exaggerate the strength of their unit, and it was a bad idea to do so. This would have been folly since the CHQPM judged a given partisan unit's performance based upon the ratio of its strength to that of the enemy and its losses relative to enemy losses.

GERMAN ANTI-PARTISAN WARFARE

Regardless of actual partisan strength, all levels of the German leadership recognised the gravity of the partisan war without reservation. However, field commanders were most vocal in their concerns. In their view, Soviet partisans constituted an immediate and ever-growing threat to the security of their rear areas, and they demanded that higher commands provide additional troops to deal with the guerrilla menace. In most cases, German commands responded to their pleas by activating additional security units and committing increased numbers of regular infantry, artillery, and armour units to anti-partisan operations.

During 1943 German commands in the occupied Soviet territories fielded a growing array of special anti-partisan units termed '*Jagd-kommandos*' [hunter commandos]. These units, whose strength averaged that of an infantry company, were supposedly capable of living and fighting in partisan infested regions for extended periods of time without

requiring additional supplies. Issue No. 91 of the collective German Field Manual entitled *Warfare against Bands* [partisans] specified the intent of these units, stating; 'Precise knowledge of partisan fighting techniques and of local conditions are a prerequisite for the successful application of crafty combat-skills. For this reason the band hunters should be employed again and again in districts that they are familiar with'.³⁴ Issues 92 and 93 of the manual covered procedures to be followed, stating:

The '*Jagdkommando*' fights in the following manner: it marches mostly by night and moves into a hidden camp in day-time. March and rest must be protected. Reconnaissance begins when the battle area has been reached. From the footprints of the bands [partisans], the band activities are ascertained. In order to avoid treachery, no contact must be made with the population. Again and again the use of stationary reconnaissance troops has been found valuable for '*Jagdkommandos*'. They observe the routes of approach and paths of the bands in places favourable for attack. Good camouflage, close liaison, and especially patience are the prerequisites of success.³⁵

Greatly alarmed by the growing partisan threat, in 1943 the German High Command initiated extensive anti-partisan operations intended to suppress this type of warfare in some of the most vital front sectors. These operations were frequently large scale in nature, and both security forces and regular divisions participated in them, often supported by substantial numbers of tanks and artillery. The main aim of these carefully executed anti-partisan offensives was to encircle the partisan formation tightly and to advance methodically through the woods and swamps to annihilate as many partisan fighters as possible. While the Germans were able to inflict substantial losses on partisan forces, in the long run these operations did not eliminate the movement.

In 1943 the Germans also altered their organisation for conducting anti-partisan warfare. Specifically, the German High Command granted more authority to rear-area commanders in each army group. Now they were responsible for securing, pacifying, administering, and exploiting the occupied territories.³⁶ They also reorganised the structure of security service in the army group rear areas. Previously, in 1941 and 1942, responsibility for rear-area security in occupied Soviet territory was the shared responsibility of both civilian and military authorities. Specifically, resident German *Reichskommissars* and the SS *Reichsfuehrers*

and their subordinates shared responsibility with military area commanders and the senior SS and police leaders, who commanded police units, security divisions, and Security Service (SD) formations. In this arrangement, the rear-area commanders of the three German army groups were charged with maintaining security and providing military administration. Therefore, whenever large-scale anti-partisan operations were planned, the local SS *Reichsfuehrers* and their Wehrmacht counterpart had to prepare in advance special agreements regarding the subordination of army, SS, and police units under single unified command.³⁷ Given natural jealousies between all parties, this was not always an easy task.

The 1943 changes simplified this procedure. From then on, all rear-area commanders were directly subordinate to the army group's operations staff (until this time military commanders had been subordinate to the army group Quartermaster-General organisation from which they received their operational instructions). Even more important, the Operational Section of the German General Staff set up a special subsection concerned with anti-partisan warfare. The SS *Reichsfuehrers* also established a Commissioner for Anti-Partisan Warfare.³⁸

German Security Divisions, which operated in the rear areas of each army group, were the largest military forces concerned with anti-partisan operations. These consisted of three security regiments, each augmented by attached motorised police battalions, artillery and signal units, SS brigades, as well as allied (primarily Hungarian) formations and indigenous police units.³⁹ In addition, the army groups often used sizeable contingents of regular troops when they conducted their large-scale anti-partisan operations in 1943 and in the spring and summer of 1944. For example, from the autumn of 1943 to the summer of 1944, the German command in Belorussia employed about 380,000 men in large-scale operations against the partisans.⁴⁰ This amounted to three times the actual partisan strength in the region. In one anti-partisan operation conducted in Belorussia in the summer of 1943, an operation code-named 'Cottbus', the German command assembled 70,000 men to operate against partisans in the Minsk District.⁴¹

Often German commanders and both military and paramilitary forces displayed utter ruthlessness in their attempts to stamp out or dampen partisan activity. For example, SS *Obergruppenfuehrer* Erich von dem Bach-Zelewski, who bore overall responsibility for anti-partisan operations in German-occupied territories, testified on anti-partisan operations at the post-war Nuremberg Trials. He argued that regular

Wehrmacht forces were the main element participating in these operations and not the police, security forces, other nationalist formations.⁴² He also testified to the severity of German anti-partisan techniques, giving rise to this exchange between Bach-Zelewski and the US Prosecutor, Colonel Telford Taylor:

T. Taylor:

Did these measures result in the killing of an unnecessarily large number of civilians?

Bach-Zelewski:

Yes ...

T. Taylor:

Was an order issued by the highest authorities that the German soldiers who had committed offences against the civilian population were not to be punished in a military court?

Bach-Zelewski:

Yes, there was such an order ... The Dirlewanger Brigade consisted for the greater part of previously convicted criminals, among them murderers and burglars. These were introduced into the anti-partisan units partly as a result of Himmler's directives which said that among the purposes of the Russian campaign was the reduction of the Slav population by thirty million.⁴³

A vast number of German documents underscore the harshness with which the Germans dealt with their 'partisan problem'. At the Nuremberg Trials, a report on the results of Operation 'Cottbus' (mentioned above) was presented to the tribunal. The report, which had been prepared on 5 June 1943 by the German General Commission for Belorussia, provided the following grim assessment of casualties produced by the operation:

These [casualty] figures indicate again a heavy destruction of the population ... If only 492 rifles are taken from 4,500 enemy dead, this shows that among them were numerous peasants from the country. The Dirlewanger Battalion especially has the reputation for destroying many human lives. Among the 5,000 people suspected of belonging to bands, there are numerous women and children ...⁴⁴

However, despite their increased authority and responsibility for rear-area security, German army group commanders still lacked the sort of absolute authority over all security, reconnaissance, and combat units

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necessary to conduct successful anti-partisan operations. In the opinion of many of these commanders, they simply did not have enough of these type of forces available to do so.⁴⁵

Interestingly enough, in spite of these well-planned and massive anti-partisan operations, many partisan units often managed to escape from the German dragnet before the operation had even begun, simply because local informants in the partisan and Party intelligence network forewarned them about German troop concentrations in the region. A few sources provide assessments of the impact of German anti-partisan operations during the period. For example, Dmytryshyn correctly pointed out:

In the spring of 1943 the Germans used front divisions – some 100,000 strong – to clear the Bryansk forest, but the result achieved did not justify the cost. The same was true of two other mass operations – the summer 1943 offensive against Soviet partisans led by Sidor A. Kovpak, who crossed the Ukraine into the Carpathians, and the perpetual German offensive against the non-Soviet Ukrainian Insurgent Army organized by ‘Taras Bulba’, whose original base of operations was in Volyn. The Germans lost against the partisans because, imbued with fantasies and intoxicated with their earlier victories, they failed to understand the aspirations of other men.⁴⁶

Moreover, German operations against the Bryansk partisans in June 1943 deprived them of valuable forces they could have used in the Kursk offensive.

In the summer of 1943 and thereafter, the frustrated Germans unleashed air power against the Soviet partisans.⁴⁷ In addition to using aircraft to support its ground troops conducting anti-guerrilla operations, German aviation also bombed and strafed villages in partisan-controlled regions. Often, apparently in accordance with standing orders, aircraft crews dropped bombs on villages as a part of their routine training.⁴⁸ From the end of the summer of 1943, Brigadier General Punzert, a commander in the German Sixth Air Fleet, received an official order to commit his auxiliary bombing units in support of ground-force anti-partisan operations. This order remained in effect until the summer of 1944 and was, in effect, rescinded during the catastrophic defeat of German Army Group Centre.⁴⁹

When summing up the impact of German anti-partisan operations conducted in 1943 in the occupied Soviet territory, it is clear that, in

most cases, the Germans inflicted heavy losses on the partisans and those in the population who supported them, and they temporarily dispersed the most important partisan formations. However, usually the bulk of partisan fighters, including their commanders and commissars, managed to evade capture and simply moved to another region where they reassembled and prepared to conduct further operations. In other words, most of the anti-partisan operations failed to achieve their premier objectives, namely the complete destruction of the partisan formations. Furthermore, many of those that the German field commanders included among their casualties could be classified as innocent bystanders rather than active or suspected guerrilla fighters. What is clear is that German forces killed many local inhabitants as virtual proxies for suspected partisans.

This was most certainly the case during a series of intense anti-partisan operations the Germans conducted in 1943 in occupied Belorussia. German reports on these operations included a list of what they termed significant 'achievements'. According to these reports, German troops shot 1,510 suspected persons in the Slonim area and 785 men in the Kossovo-Byten area during the twin operations code-named 'Hamburg' and 'Alton', which took place in January 1943 in Baranovichi District. Several months later, during May and June 1943, German troops shot another 5,000 suspects, including many women and children, during operation 'Cottbus' in the Minsk, Vitebsk, and Vileika Districts.⁵⁰ A thorough compilation of German 'achievements' in many other similar operations will undoubtedly produce a prodigious but gruesome toll of civilian casualties.

In late summer 1943, the German Command formulated yet another technique to deal with the partisan threat, namely the massive depopulation of areas where partisans were active. Accordingly, on 1 September 1943 General Bach-Zelewski issued a special order concerning the depopulation of these areas and the deportation to Germany of most of the able-bodied male inhabitants. In total, during their occupation of Belorussia, German authorities transported 380,000 persons, including those suspected of assisting the partisans, to Germany to perform forced labour.⁵¹

A few German generals understood that one of the most effective means of fighting the partisans was to win the respect and loyalty of the local population in the occupied territories. Even as late as 1943, some of these officers knew that an indigenous population favourably disposed to the Germans could conceivably turn the tide of partisan war in their

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favour. One of these few enlightened officers was General Gunther von Kluge, the commander of Army Group Centre. In order to win popular support against Communist Russia, on 22 May 1943, von Kluge presented the following rationale for a sharp change in policy toward the local population. He declared:

The development of the total situation is forcing, with growing insistence, the establishment of clear objectives with respect to the Russian people whose collaboration must be won because it will have a decisive influence on the war. The methods employed so far have failed: force is not enough. The Russian people must be won by other means and be persuaded to fight for our cause because they also see it as theirs.⁵²

Despite von Kluge's appeal, the German policy did not change. Harsh German treatment of the native population remained the single most important factor in the growth of partisan strength and will. The Germans continued to drive hundreds of thousands of decent, innocent men and women into forced labour, tortured and tormented thousands more in concentration camps, and simply massacred hundreds in cold blood. The ruins of the peaceful Belorussian forest village of Khatyn, where on 23 March 1943, the Germans massacred 149 people in cold blood, including 75 children, today stands as a stark memorial and national place of mourning. It symbolises another 500 Belorussian villages that suffered a similar fate during the dreaded German occupation. More important still, it serves as a vivid reminder of why the partisan movement flourished.⁵³

With respect to partisan war, Hitler's racial attitudes both inspired the terrible occupation and ensured the existence and growth of a powerful Soviet Partisan Movement. At the high tide of Hitler's conquests in Russia, he candidly shared with his advisers the intellectual basis of his Eastern policy. Coldly, he stated, 'As for the ridiculous hundred million Slavs, we will mould the best of them to the shape that suits us, and we will isolate the rest of them in their own pigsties; and anyone who talks about cherishing the local inhabitant and civilising him goes straight off to a concentration camp!'⁵⁴ Hitler's statement and beliefs provided context for what followed. The incredible stories of the ensuing Nazi horror in the occupied territories would be unbelievable were they not fully documented and witnessed by so many victims who survived.

In the Kiev District of the Ukraine alone, German authorities killed and tortured 339,000 local people and prisoners of war, and, in the

Stalino District, they killed another 400,000.⁵⁵ German authorities rounded up many people by force and deported them in boxcars, usually without food or water or any sanitary facilities, to Germany. There they worked as 'foreign labourers', a German euphemism meaning virtual slaves. Not only were they forced to work, but also they were degraded, beaten, and starved. Many were simply left to die for lack of food, clothing, and shelter. During this massive deportation process, wives were torn away from their husbands and children from their parents, and the Germans scattered family members to different parts of the Third Reich.

Often senior German military officers supervised or took an active part in this large scale process of kidnapping Belorussians. For example, Field Marshal Alfred Model, the commander of German Army Group North Ukraine, personally supervised such an operation, code-named 'Haying Action'.⁵⁶ These heinous actions could not avoid producing a boomerang effect among the local population. Those who could escaped the German dragnet and joined various resistance forces. The inevitable result was further expansion of the Soviet Partisan Movement and an increase in the ferocity of partisan war.

PARTISAN RECRUITMENT

Unlike the situation in 1941 and 1942, the expansion of the partisan movement in 1943 and 1944 did not involve mass recruitment of former Red Army soldiers left behind in the German rear. After 1943 the Soviet-German front moved inexorably westward, and the period of large-scale German encirclements of Soviet forces abruptly ended. Instead, new partisan recruits now came almost exclusively from the indigenous civilian population in the occupied Soviet territories. In 1943 the Soviets adopted an official draft programme which made all men between the ages of 15 and 60 liable for service in the Red Army. This new programme applied as well to the partisan regions, since the Central Headquarters of the Partisan Movement made it the basis for their recruitment. This new policy pursued two primary goals. First, it sought to increase the strength of the partisan movement, and, second, it sought to tie up as much manpower as possible to protect it from Nazi exploitation. As a result, according to both Western and Soviet sources, by late 1943 peasants conscripted in the occupied territories constituted about 50 per cent of the partisan movement's rank-and-file strength.⁵⁷ For example, on the basis of German sources, Ziemke claimed that 80

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per cent of the fighters in the partisan movement in 1943 and 1944 were peasants and former Red Army servicemen in roughly equal proportions (40 per cent each).⁵⁸ His estimate differs only slightly from the official Soviet figures. The official archival records of the CHQPM document that former workers constituted 30 per cent of registered partisans, peasants 41 per cent, and office employees (including ex-servicemen) 29 per cent.⁵⁹ Among the Ukrainian partisans, these percentages were 35.7, 47, and 17.3 respectively.⁶⁰ Further, among the 25,000 partisans active in the Orel District, these percentages were 38.8, 30.9, and 30.3 respectively.⁶¹ It is interesting to note that, overall throughout the entire war, women constituted about 10 per cent of partisan strength.⁶²

It must be admitted that, although not all peasant conscripts joined the partisan movement voluntarily, only a negligible number deserted to the Germans in 1943. Reflecting these realities, one German report stated, 'Communists and members of the troops [Red Army personnel] stand together and have a relatively high combat potential. Morale among peasant boys who were impressed is poor. However, there are hardly any deserters. Often [partisans] commit suicide rather than be taken prisoner.'⁶³

THE PARTISAN WAR AGAINST GERMAN COMMUNICATIONS

By the summer of 1943, German Army Group Centre's rear area was 200–300 kilometres wide and extended 150–200 kilometres from the actual front lines. In this region all German security, police, and other troops were subordinate to the commanders of specific army rear areas and formed so-called 'Rear Area Security Corps'. Since Army Group Centre had four subordinate armies, four such Rear Area Security Corps existed in the army group. The organic strength of each corps varied depending on the situation at the front and in the rear, but it usually consisted of special groups, police regiments, battalion-size infantry and security units, cavalry squadrons, and artillery and motorised units.

In Army Group Centre's rear area, four security divisions, the 201st, 203rd, 221st, and 286th, and security forces subordinate to the commandant of the city of Smolensk performed army group security missions. The average strength of each of these security divisions was 12,000 men.⁶⁴ Each division's primary missions were to keep the principal army group communications routes free from partisan interdiction, occupy key population centres along the army group's lines of

communications, protect army group and subordinate operational headquarters, and protect roads and railroads against partisan attacks.⁶⁵

During the spring of 1943, the Germans began mass troop movements into the central sector of the Soviet–German front to concentrate their forces for their planned summer offensive in the Kursk region (code-named Operation ‘Citadel’). The most important German regrouping took place from the Rzhev salient, which the Germans abandoned in March, to the Kursk region. Forewarned by intelligence about these movements, the Soviet Stavka ordered its partisan forces to concentrate their activities on disrupting German rail communications supporting this large scale regrouping. In particular, partisan forces were to interdict the enemy railroad network in the rear area of German Army Group Centre, which served German Second Panzer Army in the Orel salient and German Ninth Army on the northern flank of the Kursk Bulge. The main railroad lines that supplied German units of Army Group Centre’s left flank extended from Riga to Velikie Luki, from Dno through Nevel’ to Vitebsk, and from Nevel’ to Polotsk. The line running from Dno to Vitebsk was the only line connecting Army Group Centre with its northern neighbour, Army Group North. In the central sector of the front, the most important railroad lines extended from Brest through Minsk and Smolensk to Viaz’ma and from Vitebsk through Smolensk to Roslavl’. On the Kursk Bulge’s southern flank, all re-supply and regrouping in support of Army Group Centre’s southern flank was via the main railroad lines running from Mozyr’ through Gomel’ and Briansk to Orel and along branch lines from Briansk to Konotop and from Gomel’ through Zhlobin and Mogilev to Orsha. All senior German commanders realised that it was critical to keep these lines open if Army Group Centre was to achieve operational success in 1943.⁶⁶

In addition to employing partisans to disrupt traffic in the central sector of the front, the Stavka also subjected the German rail network to heavy air interdiction. General Hermann Teske, Army Group Centre’s Chief of Transportation, confirmed that Soviet aviation effectively and constantly attacked these rail lines.⁶⁷ This pattern of Soviet activity persisted throughout the entire period from early July through late August 1943 and forced a concerted German response. The Germans adopted a series of measures aimed at dealing with partisan rail sabotage and keeping the rail lines operational. These included active measures such as air and ground patrolling, the use of searchlights and armoured trains along the railroad lines, and the construction of pillboxes, bunkers, and observation towers adjacent to the tracks. Passive measures included cutting

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down trees and brush adjacent to the railways to form free fire zones, mining of the approaches to the railways, the erection of wire entanglements, the digging of protective ditches, and the erecting of *abattis* along the road bed. The Germans used sound and light signalling extensively to forewarn of partisan action, and, understandably, they focused their efforts on those rail lines that ran adjacent to or through partisan regions.

PARTISAN OPERATION '*REL'SOVAIA VOINA*' [RAIL WAR]

During the height of the Battle of Kursk (July–August 1943), on 14 July 1943, the Stavka ordered the Central Headquarters of the Partisan Movement to organise and conduct a large scale operation to disrupt the German railroad communications network. The operation, code-named '*Rel'sovaia voina*' [Rail War], took place from 3 August to 15 September 1943. The Stavka based its order on the assumption that, in order to support its forces properly, the Germans had to supply their forces with no less than 100,000 tons of cargo per day. Furthermore, this cargo had to move by rail transport. Therefore, the Stavka planned to employ the bulk of its partisan brigades in aggressive attacks against German rail lines and rail facilities, primarily in the central sector of the front. By doing so they hoped to impede railway communications and cut the logistical umbilical cord of front-line German forces. It was clear to the Stavka that simultaneous attacks on many German rail arteries could halt transport and leave trains sitting idle at rail stations. If these attacks were successful, the Germans would face insurmountable problems in restoring the rails, and they would not be able to move large contingents of security forces from one place to another.⁶⁸

Put succinctly, the question was whether or not it was possible to carry out such a large-scale and complex operation? The partisan staff judgement that such an operation was feasible was based on several factors. First, partisan warfare in the summer of 1943 had evolved into a mass movement involving literally thousands of fighters. The main partisan forces in the western strategic sector were located either astride or adjacent to the dense railway network that supplied German Army Group Centre and adjacent army groups as well. As a rule, partisan formations could carry out rail demolition without having to move long distances. The average distance from partisan camps to the key rail lines ranged from 70 to 100 kilometres. More important still, these groups were far more aggressive in 1943, especially in Army Group Centre's

rear area, than they had been in previous years.⁶⁹ As German reports indicated, in June 1943 partisans in this sector succeeded in blowing up 44 railway bridges, damaged 298 locomotives and 1,233 railway cars, and interrupted rail communications 746 times.⁷⁰ Caidin emphasised the growing partisan activity against German rail communications, noting that the Germans recorded 397 attacks in January 1943 (including 156 in the Kursk sector), 500 in February, 1,045 in May, 1,092 in June, and 1,460 in July.⁷¹

Second, by the summer of 1943, Soviet partisan formations were far better organised, equipped, and trained than they had been in 1941 and 1942. In most cases, experienced and combat-hardened veterans led them. Between May 1943 and January 1944, for example, the Central Headquarters of the Partisan Movement sent 32,867 rifles and carbines, 5,710 pistols and revolvers, 17,357 sub-machine guns, 2,608 machine guns, 590 anti-tank rifles, 737 mortars, and about 46 million different cartridges and 219,000 grenades to its partisan formations.⁷²

Ziemke observed that this increased flow of weaponry meant that the partisans were often better armed than the second and third-rate German troops sent against them.⁷³ Other Western sources substantiate this argument.⁷⁴ In fact, in 1943 the number of air re-supply sorties Soviet aviation flew in support of the partisans increased by 3.5 times in comparison with 1942. During 1943 Soviet Military Transportation Aviation (MTA) delivered about 2,190 demolition specialists and staff officers, 1,915 tons of armaments, ammunition, medical supplies and mail to partisan controlled regions, and airlifted 5,710 sick and badly wounded partisan fighters from partisan formations to the Soviet rear area.⁷⁵

Despite strenuous German efforts to disrupt partisan aerial supply links, the German effort failed after achieving only local successes. A German source cited several reasons for this failure, stating:

- (1) The Germans had neither sufficient fighter nor anti-aircraft units at their disposal to combat properly the Russian air force units in the German rear areas;
- (2) The command of anti-partisan operations was unsatisfactory and ineffective because no top-level staff was in charge of the Army and Air Force elements, the SS and police forces, the counter-intelligence, and other units used for anti-partisan operations; and
- (3) Although the Germans were aware of certain Russian prepara-

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tions for partisan warfare even before the war, no timely preparations were made except for the activation of Army security divisions to protect the lines of communication and the organization of special SS and police forces. But no individual or staff was responsible for the over-all command of anti-partisan operations.⁷⁶

Third, the increased availability of radio sets in partisan units permitted partisan commanders to receive missions by radio. Consequently, the Central Headquarters of the Partisan Movement could better coordinate partisan actions in accordance with the general concept of the operation. At the same time, improved radio communication provided the Central Headquarters with the capability to control the operation throughout its entire course and sometimes quickly shift the focus of the partisan attacks.⁷⁷

Fourth and finally, the Stavka hoped (and apparently believed) that the experience partisans had acquired during the two previous years in demolishing railroads and their improved skills in other areas would enable them to conduct the planned large-scale operations to disrupt the enemy communication network. Illustrative of this improved partisan experience is an exhibit in the Belorussian State Museum of the Great Patriotic War. The exhibit shows rail lines demolished by a trotyl (trinitrotoluene) charge that weighed only 75 grams. Only an experienced professional demolition expert could have blown up a rail line with such a charge. The fact that many partisans did so vividly illustrates their expertise.

The chief planners of Operation '*Rel'sovaia voina*' therefore faced the daunting task of supplying partisan forces with requisite quantities of high explosive. The Stavka assigned this mission to the Central Headquarters of the Partisan Movement and provided sufficient air transport for them to carry it out.

A positive factor favouring the successful conduct of this operation was the fact that German security forces protecting the rail lines were billeted primarily in garrisons at main railway stations. While these forces organised round-the-clock patrolling between the stations, they could not organise uninterrupted defences along the railways themselves. Although the Germans allocated ever-increasing numbers of security troops to railway defence in response to the intensified acts of sabotage, the railways in the German rear area remained generally accessible to partisan raiders.

General P. Ponomarenko, the chief of the CHQPM, credited the idea of organising large scale demolition of the railway lines to M. I. Zhuravlev and A. I. Nikulochkin, the former commanders of destruction battalions in the Moscow District.⁷⁸ Since the Belorussian partisans would be responsible for carrying out the main demolition effort during the operation, on 24 June 1943, the Bureau of the Central Committee of the Belorussian Communist Party held a conference to discuss the rough plan of the entire operation. At this session, which General Ponomarenko himself attended, the partisan chief presented major arguments in favour of the operation.⁷⁹ An official Bureau statement issued after the conference declared that simultaneous demolition of many rail lines would make it exceedingly difficult for the Germans to re-establish their railway communication. This, in turn, would seriously undermine the combat efficiency of German forces operating in occupied Soviet territories.⁸⁰

By 9 July 1943, Colonel I. M. Naumov, chief of the CHQPM Operations Directorate, completed planning for operation '*Rel'sovaia voina*', and Ponomarenko dispatched a letter to Stalin explaining why it was necessary to conduct the operation in the manner planned. According to the final CHQPM plan, partisan detachments numbering 96,000 fighters were to blow up 200,000–300,000 sections of railroad within the 'shortest period of time'.⁸¹ Such an immense and powerful demolition operation was intended to disrupt enemy railway communications in the central and northern sectors of the Soviet–German front for at least several days. This would provide crucial support for the large-scale multi-front Soviet Kursk counter-offensive that the Stavka planned would begin in mid-July 1943 and then expand throughout August.⁸²

On 12 July 1943, Stalin sent for Ponomarenko and asked him to provide a detailed report on the plan for the forthcoming operation to the other members of the Politburo. When asked by Stalin when partisan forces would be prepared to begin the mass rail demolition operation, Ponomarenko responded that all would be in readiness by 25 July 1943.⁸³ Stalin and the Politburo then approved Ponomarenko's plan.

On 14 July 1943, the CHQPM issued Order No. 0042, entitled 'Concerning the Partisan Rail War', which obliged the majority of the partisan units to make 'massive strikes' against the Germans' railway system.⁸⁴ The detailed plan required the Belorussian partisans to deliver their main strike with the 123 partisan units located in their partisan region. Other partisan groups taking part in the operations included 12 partisan

units in Leningrad District, nine in Kalinin District, 16 in Smolensk District, and seven in Orel District. Officially, the overall strength of partisan forces participating in the operation numbered 95,615 fighters.⁸⁵

Having received their orders from the CHQPM, subordinate partisan headquarters developed their own detailed operational plans. For example, the partisan headquarters subordinate to the Central Front, which was commanded by Colonel A. P. Matveev, prepared a plan including two variants. General of the Army K. K. Rokossovsky, the Central Front commander, adopted both variants, since he wanted to exploit partisan assistance against the German Orel grouping to the maximum. Matveev's plan envisioned the conduct of operation '*Rel'sovaya voina*' in two distinct phases. During the first phase, which would endure for from 15–60 days, the partisans would conduct complex intermittent mining of all German railway lines. The second phase would involve the dispatch of sabotage groups numbering 15–25 men each to demolish the remaining rail sectors and to complete the paralysis of German rail communications throughout the Orel District.⁸⁶

Virtually every partisan formation taking part in the operation prepared its own plan concerning what to demolish and how to do it. For example, the 4th Kletsk Partisan Brigade plan required that it blow up no less than 960 railway sectors along the Gomel'–Briansk rail line and also 'destroy the railway station at Zhudilovo'.⁸⁷ By 2 August 1943, each partisan detachment of Belorussian partisan forces taking part in the operation had activated no less than 15 demolition groups of four men each.⁸⁸ Meanwhile, chief propaganda organisations printed many inspirational leaflets calling upon the partisans to display 'maximum activity' [*aktivnost*']. In its leaflet, the Orel District Party committee summoned the partisans of the Orel District to do all in their power to prevent enemy communications 'along Russian roads'.⁸⁹

To provide those partisans who needed it with practical training in mass demolition, the Central Front headquarters developed, printed, and dispatched to all partisan units special instructions entitled 'Partisans! Destroy the Enemy's Railways'. This instruction told partisans how to demolish railroad tracks with 75-gram trinitrotoluene blocks. *Front* headquarters also prepared other instruction with titles such as 'Techniques of Partisan Sabotage of Enemy Lines of Communications', 'Instructions Concerning How to Disrupt Water Supply of Railways in Territory Temporarily Occupied by the Enemy', 'Concise Instructions on Destroying the Rails of Enemy Railroads', and several others. At the same time, Soviet central Party organs instructed under-

ground Party committees to pay as much attention as possible to fulfilling the aims of Operation '*Rel'sovaia voina*'. As a result, many regional and district Party secretaries organised meetings with commanders and commissars of the partisan brigades and detachments to discuss the forthcoming operation.⁹⁰

The CHQPM demanded that partisan forces also obstruct other elements of the enemy's supply system by destroying rail and road bridges, road junctions, railroad centres, and storage facilities for equipment, food, and gasoline. Where no radios existed, they delivered some fragmentary orders to partisan formations by the use of liaison officers and other messengers.⁹¹ These orders emphasised that it was not enough just to destroy tracks and derail locomotives and other parts of a given train. It was also necessary to kill the train crews. CHQPM instructions pointed out that locomotives could be best destroyed by blowing up, burning, or otherwise damaging their steam boilers, for example, by the use of armour-piercing shells, or by exploding and burning the accompanying coal tenders. After partisans killed the train crews and guards, they were to destroy any gasoline or other fuel the trains were transporting. To do so effectively, partisans were to attack with the greatest possible energy. Finally, the CHQPM requested that all partisan unit commanders and commissars immediately recommend those partisans who were responsible for train derailments for receipt of state decorations and rewards. If they could not submit these recommendations immediately, then they were told to retain the documentary evidence and submit the recommendation at a more propitious time.⁹²

To help ensure that the operation was a success, between 15 June and 11 July 1943, the CHQPM sent to partisan units a total of 150 tons of TNT (dynamite), 150,000 metres of Bickford fuses, 28,200 metres of hemp cord, 695,000 detonating caps, and 35,000 mine fuses. In addition, the partisans were instructed to smelt TNT from dud and unexploded aviation bombs. Some partisan detachments even detailed special observers to keep record of unexploded aviation bombs and their use for other purposes.⁹³

The Soviet carefully timed the commencement of the massive demolition operation against enemy railways to coincide with the specific combat situation on the Soviet–German front. The Germans finally launched their offensive against the Kursk Bulge on 5 July 1943, but by 12 July their forces had been halted in the north after only insignificant gains, and their forces in the south had advanced only 30–35 kilometres into the Russian defensive positions. At this juncture using massive re-

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grouped reserves, the Soviet unleashed their counter-offensive. With German offensive strength eroded by their seven days of heavy attacks, counter-attacking Soviet forces achieved immediate success. By 5 August 1943, the Red Army recaptured Orel and Belgorod and began to move forward on a broad front extending southward to the Black Sea. The city of Khar'kov fell to Soviet forces on 23 August, and by mid-September Novorossiisk and the Taman' Peninsula passed into Soviet hands. By the end of September, the situation for the Germans had worsened to the extent that Poltava and Smolensk had fallen to the Red Army, and Soviet forces reached the Germans' well equipped 'Winter Line' along the banks of the Dnepr River. All of this intense combat required constant German use of their rail network, first, to supply their forces in the central sector, and then to re-group their forces to counter the burgeoning Soviet offensives. For example, the Soviet offensive in the Smolensk sector alone required that von Kluge's Army Group Centre transport 14 divisions, including 11 from the Orel-Briansk sector, to his army group so that it could stave off disaster.⁹⁴

The first major strike against enemy communications lines during Operation '*Rel'sovaia voina*' was delivered by partisan forces who attacked from the southern portion of the Briansk forests, which was very close to the railways which supplied German Army Groups Centre and South. On 20 and 21 July 1943, 11 partisan brigades marched up to 120 kilometres (many were closer) and attacked the Briansk-L'gov, Briansk-Unecha, and Navlia-Khutor-Mikhailovskii rail lines. According to German prisoner-of-war testimony and partisan intelligence reports, it took the Germans up to three days to re-establish traffic along these lines.⁹⁵ Cooper evaluated the effectiveness of the partisans' actions on the basis of German reports, stating:

In the night of 21 [July] a total of 430 demolitions were set off simultaneously on the main railway running south of Bryansk and the line was blocked for 2 days. By the end of July, no fewer than 1,114 attacks on the railways in the central sector had been reported by the Germans, an average of 36 a day . . . During the month, the Germans suffered damage of 358 locomotives and 1,235 trucks out of 2,282 trains sent through the sector, while the affected stretches of line were blocked for a total of 2,688 hours.⁹⁶

The Briansk partisans continued their massive demolition effort along the railway lines until the end of July. This prompted General von Kluge to complain about the inordinate delay in transporting replace-

ment units to the Kursk region, where heavy combat still raged.⁹⁷ Of course, the main problem the German High Command faced was not just the shortage of personnel and the failure to receive timely replacements. Even more serious was the fact that units already en route to the combat zone were frequently delayed by the constant Soviet sabotage to rail lines.

Throughout August 1943 forces of the Soviet Central, Voronezh, Steppe, South-western, and Southern Fronts accelerated their offensive actions and were soon joined by the Western and Kalinin Fronts further north. In response, the Germans urgently attempted to transfer reserves from one region to another to deal with local crises and stem the Soviet offensive avalanche. To interdict the movement of German reserves and impede the by now almost frantic regrouping of German forces, the Soviet command accelerated its Operation '*Rel'sovaia voina*'. On the night of 3 August, in accordance with a signal received from the CHQPM, 167 partisan detachments in Belorussia, the Ukraine, and in the Orel, Smolensk, Leningrad, and Kalinin Districts simultaneously began demolition operations against railways in the rear areas of Army Groups North, Centre, and South. This massive sabotage of the German railway occurred along a 1,000-kilometre front and to a depth of 1,000 kilometres. Although the partisans planned to demolish rails in 26,000 sectors during the first night of the attack, in actuality they succeeded in damaging 42,000 sectors comprising 262 kms of a single-track railway.⁹⁸

Thus, the early stages of Operation '*Rel'sovaia voina*' were remarkably successful. The chief of the CHQPM, General Ponomarenko, later recalled that his headquarter's main communications centre was busy the entire night of 4 August 1943 receiving a constant flow of radio reports from partisan units.⁹⁹ The furious partisan attacks against the Nazi railway network persisted through the whole of August and September. According to Soviet archival records, by 31 August the number of demolished German rail sectors reached 171,000, and by 15 September 214,705.¹⁰⁰ The security service of German Army Group Centre reported that, during August 1943, the number of demolitions counted along rail lines in its rear area increased 30-fold.¹⁰¹ All told, the 171,000 demolished rail sectors was equivalent to 1,000 linear kilometres of single-track railway.¹⁰² Though the German Transport Command in the central sector of the front numbered over 50,000 (according to Cooper, 51,000) men, they simply could not cope with the task of repairing such an extensive length of demolished rail lines, at least in timely fashion.¹⁰³

Interpretations have varied significantly regarding the real effectiveness of the partisan rail demolition operation. Western estimates of partisan strength in the operation and the operation's effectiveness vary substantially, depending on the sources the historians relied upon. For example, Laqueur quoted German sources to state that, on 2 August, more than 100,000 partisans 'planted' 8,422 mines on the German railway tracks.¹⁰⁴ While focusing his attention on the Pripiat' area before and during the Battle of Kursk, Macksey concluded that the partisans were most active prior to the operation and demolished more rails during that period than during the operation itself. He wrote that, within a period of three weeks before the battle of Kursk, the partisans attempted about 80 'cuts' [demolitions] a week in the Pripiat' area, but in the succeeding three-week period they made only 90 attempts, more than half of which aborted.¹⁰⁵ On the other hand, referring to German reports, M. Caidin wrote that the main railroad network, which handled the supplies of three German armies was 'blasted at 2,000 points in a single night and so effectively disrupted that all traffic was stalled for several days'.¹⁰⁶ Finally, Werth writes that on 20–21 July about 5,800 rails were blown up.¹⁰⁷

The figures and judgements contained in Russian and Western sources differ, first of all, because the different authors employed differing units of measurement. Western historians, like the authors of the German military reports they relied upon, simply calculated the number of places where demolitions occurred. However, at any given location, several, rather than only one, rails were damaged or destroyed. In the event several rails were demolished at a single location, it was certainly a more complicated task for the Germans to replace them or to repair the demolished railway sector. Since the CHQPM ordered the destruction of several rail lines at a single point, that is the basis they used for calculating the amount of damage inflicted.

In addition to the simple demolitions, very often the partisans dismantled the rails and hid them in the forests or sunk them in nearby marshes, rivers, and lakes. The partisans used this method primarily when they were short of high explosives. In this fashion, in August 1943 the fighters of three large partisan units in the Rovno District of the Ukraine managed both to blow up and dismantle about 34 kilometres of permanent railroad way.¹⁰⁸

In some cases, German security troops were able to disarm a certain number of mines laid under the rails by the partisans before they exploded. Apparently, partisans counted these mining activities as successful attempts and included them in their reports to the

CHQPM as demolished rail sectors. A critical approach to a problem such as this can smooth out the differences to some degree. What is important, however, is the fact that the majority of historians in both the West and the East agree that Operation '*Rel'sovaia voina*' was an ambitious and daring operation, and that it was one of the outstanding successes of the Soviet Partisan Movement during the entire war. The large-scale partisan activity at that time did indeed contribute significantly to the Red Army victory over the Germans during the Battle of Kursk and, in particular, during the later stages of the battle. After the war, General of the Army M. Popov, the Briansk Front commander, wrote, 'The partisans' assistance was an important factor in [the success] of the Soviet offensive.'¹⁰⁹

Additional details are now available about the exploits of separate partisan formations during this massive operation. For example, the '*Imeni Lenina*' [In the name of Lenin] Partisan Brigade, commanded by V. Vasil'ev, achieved considerable success while operating in the Pinsk District of Belorussia. So effective was his brigade that the Germans had to work hard repairing the section of the railway running from Baranovichi to Luninets (specifically in the Budy–Luninets sector) until mid-September 1943. On 19 September the German Transportation Commission finally recorded the sector as again ready for transportation. However, on 20 September the partisans once again damaged the railroad, this time so severely that the subsequent repairs lasted until 21 October 1943.¹¹⁰ The demolition accomplished by Vasil'ev's brigade was so energetic and effective that some partisans named the operation, 'Salutations to the Advancing Red Army.'¹¹¹ In August 1943, in addition to damaging rails, another partisan detachment operating in the Mogilev District blew up four railway bridges, three pump-houses, two water-distribution centres, three railway stations with railway equipment, and burned down a railroad tie production plant.¹¹²

During the same period, the '*Za Rodinu*' [For the Motherland] Partisan Brigade, commanded by I. Ponasenkov, which was operated in the Briansk forests, received the mission of disrupting enemy railroad communications along the Gomel'–Briansk railway in the Rassukha–Pochen sector, where about 70 trains passed each day. On the night of 3 August 1943, partisans in this brigade demolished 1,026 rails and a railway bridge over the Dubna River. They also burned three trains carrying 46 vehicles, six tanks and four guns, 30 freight cars with artillery ammunition and aviation bombs, eight tank-cars filled with petrol, and 17 freight cars with cartridges.¹¹³ In the vicinity of the nearby village of

Zhudilovo, they destroyed German ammunition and grain depots and a creamery.¹¹⁴

Other partisan forces enjoyed similar successes. On the night of 7 August, a partisan regiment commanded by S. Grishin blew up 650 rails.¹¹⁵ At the same time, the partisan detachment '*Imeni Kotovskogo*' [In the name of Kotovsky] destroyed 420 rails.¹¹⁶ A. Ovsiannikov, the commander of the '*Imeni Suvorova*' [In the name of Suvorov] Partisan Brigade, which was operating in the Vitebsk District of Belorussia, recalled that the night of 3 August 1943 was a real 'nightmare'. That night the intense enemy machine gun and rifle fire was finally suppressed only by the continuous explosions of mines set under the rails.¹¹⁷ Finally, partisans operating in the Minsk District managed to put the Molo-dechno–Minsk sector of rail line out of action for 10 days.¹¹⁸

The series of co-ordinated attacks on communications routes in German Army Group Centre's rear area in August 1943 caused considerable headaches for Army Group Centre's transportation service. An OKW diary entry dated 6 August 1943 stated that, owing to 'the lightning' partisan attacks, railway communication in the army group rear area was literally 'paralysed'.¹¹⁹ According to a report made by the commander of security forces in Army Group Centre, during August 1943 the number of demolitions in the army group's zone of operations increased 50-fold.¹²⁰ He added that very often trains could move only during daylight, and carriages filled with sand had to move in front of the locomotives for protection against Russian mines.¹²¹

Partisan formations operating on the flanks of German Army Group Centre also operated aggressively during Operation '*Rel'sovaia voina*'. In the rear area of the Army Group South, the partisans focused their efforts on disrupting German rail communications to Orel, Belgorod, and Khar'kov. The Germans used these lines primarily to transport *matériel* and ammunition. Russian sources claimed that partisans so disrupted the Bakhmach–Kiev, Poltava–Kiev, Khar'kov–Lozovaia, and other rail lines that the Germans had to transport supply loads via the neighbouring rail lines through Odessa.¹²² In this general region, S. Kaplun's 2nd Partisan Brigade severed communications along the Sarany–Luninets rail lines and prevented any German trains from employing the line from 15 August until 19 October 1943.¹²³

Some partisan units also attempted to disrupt German logistical traffic travelling along rivers and canals in their respective sectors, but these achieved only limited success. During the period when such navigation was possible during 1943, Ukrainian partisan formations managed to

sink and destroy 90 enemy ships, rafts, barges, and motor boats.¹²⁴ During the same period, Belorussian partisan fighters of Poles'e District blew up six sluices on the Dnepr–Bug Canal. This damage brought all German navigation along this canal to a temporary halt.¹²⁵

By 1 August 1943, a total of 4,203 partisans organised into five brigades, one regiment, and several separate detachments were operating in the rear area of German Army Group North.¹²⁶ These partisan forces closely co-ordinated their activity with Leningrad and Volkhov Front forces which were conducting an offensive against the Eighteenth Army in the Mga salient south-east of Leningrad. To assist the advance of both fronts' forces, the partisans commenced their portion of Operation '*Rel'sovaia voina*' on 1 August, two days before their compatriots to the south. Throughout the entirety of August, they struggled to paralyse the Warsaw, Baltic, and Pskov–Dno railways, which were Army Group North's main communication arteries. Within this month alone, the 3rd Partisan Brigade claimed that it blew up rails in 10,000 places, derailed 15 trains, and destroyed 7 small enemy garrisons.¹²⁷ German Army Group North's Order No. 8 dated 19 August 1943 underscored German appreciation of the Leningrad partisan's demolition campaign.¹²⁸

Because of the aggressive partisan attacks on rail communications, Army Group North was forced to use truck transport to move reinforcements to the crucial sectors of the front where combat raged. Although his comments related to events that took place in October 1943, Ziemke captured the ferocity of the partisan fighting in this region, stating:

Meanwhile the partisans had so thoroughly disrupted the railroads that the other two reserve divisions had to be routed to Pskov, 130 miles north of Nevel, and there loaded in trucks, not enough of which were available. On 9 October Kuchler decided to wait until the reinforcements were assembled before trying again to close the gap.¹²⁹

The same thing occurred in other regions as German commanders had to resort to road transport in lieu of their damaged rail system.¹³⁰

While conducting their demolition operation, the partisans used considerable imagination as they followed CHQPM instructions to destroy rails by every possible means rather than just by explosives. For example, A. Burchanov, the chief of the Operations Division of the Belorussian Headquarters of the Partisan Movement, recalled that, after the partisans of Gomel' District dismantled the rails, they used layers of sleeping cars and rails to make so-called 'puff-pastries'. The 'puff-

pastries' consisted of alternating layers of rails and sleeping cars piled one upon the other so that they resembled the culinary delicacy. Then they set fire to their 'puff-pastry', and, as a result, the bent and mangled rails could never again be used. Similarly, partisan fighters in the Minsk District learned how to bend the rails in such a fashion that their further use was out of the question, and the rails became nothing more than scrap-metal. These actions, conducted on a large scale, forced the Germans to transport fresh rails from Poland and even Germany itself and delayed timely railroad repairs. In August 1943 alone, 5,000 German railway cars and dozens of locomotives were tied up transporting railway rails to regions where Soviet partisans had carried out their demolition operations.¹³¹

However, some partisan units were not as active as the CHQPM wished them to be, even in the central sector of the front. Soviet documents captured by the Germans provide some evidence of this fact. For example, the Germans captured a report made by a representative of the Vitebsk District Communist Party Committee to his boss, the committee's First Secretary. The committee had dispatched the representative to a district partisan brigade to serve as control officer, meaning to monitor the brigade's combat performance. The representative reported that, even during the August period, when CHQPM Order No. 0042 demanded the greatest possible partisan activity, not all brigades and detachments complied. The control officer wrote:

I report that on 27 August 1943 a staff conference took place in the Falalaev Brigade, during which the detachment commanders, Semenov and Diumin, reported on detachment combat operations during the current month and on their execution of Order No. 0042. It was determined at the meeting that the Semenov Detachment has neither killed a single German nor blown up a single railroad line during this month. Semenov explains his activity [justifies his inaction] by pointing out the poor equipment possessed by his detachment and [poor] current training in the details of sabotage.¹³²

The remainder of this report indicates that the controller's conclusion may have been influenced by intrigues between local Party officials and detachment commanders. Nevertheless, the fact was that some partisan units were not as active as they should have been and displayed low combat efficiency. Hence, higher headquarters rightly criticised (and often disciplined) unit commanders and commissars for this inactivity.

Partisan headquarters noted similar inactivity in other regions. For example, a total of 40 partisan detachments, organised into brigades and 18 separate detachments, operated in the Belorussian Poles'e District in the summer of 1943. However, only a portion of this force conducted demolitions on the first official day of Operation '*Rel'sovaia voina*'. These active forces were four partisan detachments belonging to V. Korotkevich's partisan brigade. Consequently, the underground Party district committee sought to determine the causes of the inactivity. They concluded that the poor performance occurred because some partisan unit commanders and commissars were not 'persistent enough' in their preparations for sabotage, they had overestimated the strength of enemy security forces in their target areas, and they reached 'erroneous conclusions'. This criticism proved to be beneficial, since the activity of this brigade soon increased markedly.¹³³

When assessing the results and impact of the demolition operation, higher partisan headquarters detected some deficiencies in its conduct. Specifically, some of the methods the partisans used to demolish railways proved to be ineffective. For example, while preparing for Operation '*Rel'sovaia voina*', the partisans of Kalinin District counted heavily on the effectiveness of the so-called 'conveyor technique' of demolition. This technique involved the use of one demolition man to place the high explosive charge under the rails and another man who followed him to set off the explosive charge by igniting the Bickford fuse. Demolition groups practised this method repeatedly prior to their August operation. However, when the mass sabotage began on 3 August, team members who were to light the Bickford fuse spent excessive time locating the Bickford fuse in the darkness. Often they could not locate the fuse; therefore, many of the charges failed to explode at all. After thorough analysis of this technique, the partisan high command cancelled it and reverted to the use of an older practice whereby a single demolition specialist placed the charge under the rails and blew it up himself.¹³⁴

After detailed and scrupulous analysis of Soviet archival materials, two Russian military historians, Colonels A. Kniazkov and N. Aziassky, concluded that the Soviet partisans operating in the rear area of the Army Group North during Operation '*Rel'sovaia voina*' did not fulfil the task assigned to them by the CHQPM. Specifically, the Central Headquarters had demanded that they demolish 33,740 rails in the operation. However, partisans in this sector actually managed to demolish only 14,357 rail sectors, which represented only 42.5 per cent

of the requirement.¹³⁵ Their analysis also indicated that the contribution made by the Ukrainian partisans was also rather modest. They succeeded in demolishing a total of only 7,100 rail sectors.¹³⁶ Of course, in this case, the 'modesty' was in comparison with the more stellar performance of partisan fighters from Belorussia or the Kalinin, Smolensk, and Orel Districts.

Despite the serious shortcomings indicated above, partisan performance in Operation '*Rel'sovaia voina*' represented a major contribution to the Red Army's achievement of victory at Kursk and in subsequent operations. The main focus of partisan demolitions and sabotage activity took place on the principal and shortest railway connections between Germany and German forces concentrated around the Kursk bulge, such as the Brest–Kalinkovichi–Briansk railway and the critical Nevel–Orsha–Unecha–Khutor–Michailovsky railway line. In August 1943 the partisans conducted 28,000 successful demolitions along the former and about 13,000 along the latter.¹³⁷ This massive sabotage put these major communication arteries out of action continually, and the time required to repair the damage seriously impeded German supply of needed material and personnel to crucial sectors of the Soviet–German front. In essence, it prevented the Germans from carrying out planned force regroupings in timely enough fashion to meet and defeat the growing Red Army offensive.

The war diary of the German OKW included an entry indicating how Soviet partisan demolition activity impeded fuel resupply to the German Sixth Air Fleet, which was supporting German forces in the Battle of Kursk. It stated that during June 1943 the Sixth Air Fleet expended 8,634 tons of aviation fuel but received during that same period only 5,722 tons of fuel. This shortfall severely limited the employment of German tactical aviation during the latter stages of the battle.¹³⁸

One of the key figures in the formulation of Soviet wartime military strategy was four-times Hero of the Soviet Union Marshal G. K. Zhukov, who was promoted to the rank of Marshal after the Red Army's success at Kursk.¹³⁹ He wrote in his memoirs that the partisan fighters operating in Belorussia and in the Smolensk and Orel Districts contributed significantly to Red Army victories in the summer of 1943 at Belgorod, Orel, and Khar'kov.¹⁴⁰ Further, as in the case of the earlier Soviet victories at Moscow and Stalingrad, the Kursk victory too stimulated strong new growth of the partisan movement overall. Thus, official Soviet sources indicate that during Operation '*Rel'sovaia voina*' the strength of the Belorussian partisans increased by 17,000 men.¹⁴¹ Of this

number, the percentage of local inhabitants among the Belorussian partisans rose to about 80 per cent.¹⁴² Western historians also recorded this growth process. For example, Treadgold estimated that partisan strength in the central sector of the Soviet-German front by the end of 1943 was close to 150,000 men.¹⁴³ According to official Russian sources, the total number of partisans fighting in December 1943 amounted to 250,000 men, an increase of about 250 per cent in comparison with the end of 1942.¹⁴⁴

THE SITUATION IN 1944

Exploiting their new strength, the partisans continued their heavy and effective strikes against the German railway communication system in German-occupied territories throughout 1944, particularly during the summer. This was especially true in the central sector of the front. There, in summer 1944 Soviet partisan activities continued to pose the same deadly threat to German troop and supply movements as they had in the summer of 1943. Once again, their target was German Army Group Centre, which this time was defending in Belorussia.

From the German perspective, the situation on the Soviet-German front deteriorated markedly in 1944. After the Germans withdrew to defence lines along the Dnepr and Sozh Rivers in autumn 1943, in late autumn Soviet forces seized sizeable footholds across the river and threatened to drive deep into both Belorussia and the Ukraine. New Soviet offensives began rippling across the front in January 1944. In January 1944 Soviet forces irrevocably broke the Leningrad siege and advanced almost to Pskov. In February the forces of Marshal I. S. Konev's 2nd Ukrainian Front and General N. F. Vatutin's 1st Ukrainian Front encircled the better part of German Eighth Army in a salient near Korsun'. Meanwhile, other forces from Vatutin's *front* drove westward toward Kovel', and General R. Ia. Malinovsky's 3rd Ukrainian Front cut off the eastern tip of the German salient at Krivoi Rog. In March 1944 Zhukov, who had replaced the mortally wounded Vatutin as 1st Ukrainian Front commander, launched a massive offensive toward Ternopol'. Operating in tandem, Konev's forces overran the important German base at Uman' and cut the Odessa railway. German defences were collapsing everywhere. By the end of March, Zhukov's forces had crossed the Dnestr River and captured Chernovtsy, and, soon, both his and Konev's armies approached the Prut River, the border

between Rumania and the Soviet Union. The Germans tried to stand firm in the Crimea but were overrun by the Red Army in April and May 1944.¹⁴⁵

OPERATION 'BAGRATION'

As a result of these frenetic operations, by the summer of 1944 the Soviet–German front line formed an immense salient around Belorussia, the so-called 'Belorussian balcony' [*balkon*]. This balcony became the Soviet Stavka's next target. German forces concentrated in this grand salient included all of Army Group Centre, the partisans' old enemy, and portions of neighbouring army groups. The force totalled about 1,200,000 officers and men organised into 63 divisions and three brigades, 900 tanks, 9,500 artillery pieces, supported by 1,350 combat aircraft.¹⁴⁶ The Soviet command concentrated a much larger force to conduct the offensive, a force which numbered 2.4 million men (166 divisions and 12 corps), 5,200 tanks, 36,400 guns and mortars, and 5,300 combat aircraft.¹⁴⁷ When fully concentrated for the offensive, the Soviets achieved force superiority in terms of armour, artillery, and aircraft as high as 10:1 over their opponents.¹⁴⁸

When planning the destruction of German Army Group Centre, Soviet strategists considered the large partisan force in Belorussia, which, by the summer of 1944, numbered 143,000 partisan fighters organised into 150 brigades and 47 separate detachments.¹⁴⁹ In spite of the large scale anti-partisan operations the Germans conducted in the spring of 1944, the Belorussian partisans were still an experienced and highly organised force (see Maps 16 and 17).

On 23 June 1944, the long-awaited Soviet offensive on the central front, code-named Operation 'Bagration', began. It developed with such overwhelming power that, within days, German Army Group Centre was completely smashed. Soviet forces tore the front wide open and ultimately cleared a path into Poland and East Prussia. The German High Command assembled all available reserves and quickly rushed them to fill the breach in Belorussia and stem the headlong Soviet advance. The massive Soviet victory considerably assisted Allied forces in expanding their bridgeheads in Normandy during their Operation 'Overlord' by drawing critical German reserves eastward.¹⁵⁰ In a speech at a session of the British Parliament, Winston Churchill highly praised the efficiency of the Red Army in the summer of 1944.¹⁵¹

PARTISAN SUPPORT FOR OPERATION 'BAGRATION'

As Soviet forces poured into central Belorussia, the principal mission of the Belorussian partisans was to facilitate the Red Army's advance in every possible way. Close to the front, they conducted a wide range of pre-arranged missions, such as reconnoitring enemy positions, severing specific routes of use to the Germans for re-grouping and withdrawing forces, seizing key river-crossing sites, mine clearing, and attacking enemy forces from the rear. Deeper in the German rear, they cut German communications routes and concentrated on the destruction of German transport and supply depots.¹⁵² After analysing Soviet partisan activity in summer 1944, one German source concluded (in this case in Army Group North's sector), 'In 1944 activities of partisans, reinforced by infiltrated troops, had reached such proportions west of the extremely swampy Narva River that the left wing of the northern front (III SS Panzer Corps) had to be pulled back in order to form a shorter and more easily guarded line'.¹⁵³ Despite the fact that partisan actions in and of themselves seldom forced the Germans to retreat, they certainly did compound German problems and hasten the collapse of German Army Group Centre. Belorussian territory was and still is pock-marked by numerous lakes, marshes, and swamps and traversed by many streams and rivers, all of which formed serious obstacles for attacking or retreating forces. Therefore, it was only natural that Soviet commands treated the partisans as if they were regular army engineers. It is also a fact that the partisans provided the Red Army with significant assistance in crossing Belorussia's many rivers and streams. The partisans procured crossing materials, often in advance, prepared proper bridgeheads, often by seizing them from enemy forces, and held them until the arrival of regular Red Army forces. This occurred at numerous crossing sites on the Dnepr, Desna, Pripiat' and a host of other rivers.

For example, partisan fighters from the Belorussian '*Zhelezniak*' [Iron-Stone] Partisan Brigade, which was commanded by A. Scliarenko, co-operated with the advancing Red Army units to seize a crossing over the Berezina River. On 27 June 1944, the brigade moved to the Berezina River and seized a crossing site. After repelling numerous German counterattacks, the brigade held the crossing until the arrival of Major General A. A. Aslanov's 35th Guards Tank Brigade, the spearhead of 3rd Belorussian Front's 3rd Guards Mechanised Corps. After the successful river crossing, the *tankists* [tank men] and partisans continued

the advance together. Since they were intimately familiar with the terrain, the partisans also served as scouts and guides.¹⁵⁴

During Operation 'Bagration', the Stavka ordered the Belorussian partisans to seize and hold large regions. The Stavka hoped that this would confine retreating German forces to a limited number of roads and railways, which both partisan and Soviet forces could then attack to either block or slow down the German withdrawal and give the Soviet Army a better opportunity to destroy the entire German force. Through the CHQPM, the Stavka also ordered the partisans to fulfil other tasks, such as carrying out diversionary activities, acquiring targets for Army and Air Force units, and providing post-strike analysis on the results of Soviet air attacks.¹⁵⁵

On 8 June 1944, the Belorussian Communist Party Central Committee instructed the partisan formations to inflict maximum damage on the enemy communications network beginning on 20 June 1944, the very eve of Operation 'Bagration', to disrupt or paralyse German communications. On the night of 20 June alone, partisans blew up about 40,000 rails and derailed 147 enemy trains.¹⁵⁶ Through the end of June 1944, the partisans demolished another 20,000 sectors of rail track.¹⁵⁷ They inflicted this tremendous destruction predominantly along the Pinsk–Luninets, Borisov–Orsha, and Molodechno–Polotsk rail lines, and the attacks almost completely halted all German railroad traffic along the most crucial lines in this region. While operating in conjunction with attacking Soviet regular forces, the partisans obstructed the Nazi withdrawal across numerous swamps and water obstacles.¹⁵⁸ One German source, Georg Teske, claimed the railway communication in the rear area of the Army Group Centre came to a full stop.¹⁵⁹ Then chief of the German General Staff, General Heinz Guderian, considered that the German misfortune in Belorussia during the summer of 1944 occurred, to a considerable extent, because of the active and bold partisan operations in this sector of the Soviet–German front.¹⁶⁰

It is noteworthy that this extensive demolition operation did not unfold indiscriminately. Instead, it was based on an operational concept developed by the Stavka in Moscow in conjunction with Red Army *fronts* that participated in the operation. One Western author recognised the sophistication of Soviet planning. He stated that not long before Operation 'Bagration' commenced, the Soviet High Command ordered a halt to partisan attacks in the central region of Army Group Centre's rear area, and, at the same time, Soviet forces conducted a feint attack in the Army Group's southern sector. The Germans reacted, he claimed, as

expected; they immediately sent their reserves southward by rail, a movement which the partisans did not impede. Then, he stated:

Hardly had the German reinforcements arrived in the south, when, surprisingly, the Red Army attacked with full force in the north, and when the Germans wanted to send the badly-needed reinforcements back by rail to the north in order to prop up the tattering northern front, the partisans, again on Red Army orders, in an unprecedented demonstration of mass destruction, brought the rail traffic to an almost complete standstill. Army Group Centre, denuded of troops and cut off from reinforcements, collapsed.¹⁶¹

Western authors have generally given high marks to the effectiveness of partisan sabotage of German railway communication before and during Operation 'Bagration'.¹⁶² One group of authors stated, 'The partisans set to work during the night 19–20 June and in 10,500 separate places blew the rail lines and bridges from the Dnepr to west of Minsk, severing all supply traffic as much as several days in some places'.¹⁶³ Heilbrunn termed the partisan rail sabotage as a 'Knock-out blow against the railway line in the Army Group Centre area'.¹⁶⁴ Laqueur declared, 'The great Russian offensive of June 1944 was again preceded by massive partisan attacks on railway lines, with more than 10,000 minings taking place 2 nights before its start'.¹⁶⁵ In this instance, the main difference between the assessments of Western and Russian sources concerns the actual number of rails destroyed on the night of 19–20 June 1944, a difference already discussed above. In addition, there are some Western authors who question the efficiency of Soviet partisans even at this period of the war. For example, Macksey argued that the demolitions and ambushes conducted by the partisans 'proved more costly to attackers than to Germans', and that they actually helped implement the Germans' 'scorched earth' policy.¹⁶⁶ In a variation of these themes, Cooper argues, not without reason, that the partisan demolition operations against motor highways were notably less successful than those against railroads. Moreover, he points out that the Germans successfully removed or defused about 65 per cent of all explosive devices that the partisan fighters employed.¹⁶⁷

Looking back in history to the summer of 1944, Russians and Belorussians alike can take deep satisfaction in the Belorussian operation, which was so brilliantly conceived and carried out by the four Soviet *fronts* under overall Stavka guidance. The operation completely routed

German Army Group Centre, inflicted grievous defeat on Army Group North Ukraine, and liberated Belorussia, a large part of Latvia, and substantial areas of Poland east of the Vistula River. The German defeat was overwhelming, and Belorussian partisans made major contributions to it. Ziemke captured the immensity and swiftness of the Soviet victory as he later wrote, 'On 4 July the Russians going toward Baranovich forced 9th Army to center its effort there, and after that the only troops to get out of the pocket were individuals and small groups who made their way through the Nalibocka Forest, sometimes helped by the Polish peasants.'¹⁶⁸ On 17 July 1944, about 60,000 captured German officers and soldiers headed by 19 generals walked solemnly along the streets of Moscow – a gesture of the Soviet leadership's keen political sense.¹⁶⁹

With complete control of the strategic initiative, the Stavka had prepared the operation with great care, ensuring tight co-ordination not only between the *fronts*, which represented the main shock power of the operation, but also between partisan formations and regular army units. In his memoirs, Marshal of the Soviet Union K. K. Rokossovsky, commander of the 1st Belorussian Front in Operation 'Bagration', described how his forces co-operated with the partisans. He wrote, 'The *front* Military Council member, P. K. Ponomarenko, and M. S. Malinin contacted the Belorussian partisans. They [the partisans] were a great force here, and we wanted to draw up plans for joint actions during the course of the operation. In this task we received invaluable help from Comrade Ponomarenko, who served as Chief of Partisan Headquarters and First Secretary of the Belorussian Communist Party.'¹⁷⁰ Throughout the entire operation, Rokossovsky's subordinate army headquarters maintained close liaison with the partisans. At the same time, partisan command employed their units skilfully, and in conjunction with Red Army forces, participated in the encirclement of many large and small German groups. Partisan brigades and detachment commanders, well seasoned and experienced from previous engagements in 1942 and 1943 in most cases, provided effective leadership for their troops.

Officially, during the Belorussian operation, which lasted from 23 June to 29 August 1944, Soviet forces advanced a distance of 550–600 kilometres and expanded their attack frontage up to 1,000 kilometres.¹⁷¹ One Western source described the Red Army's advance in 1944 as 'slow and on the whole methodical'.¹⁷² Methodical it was, and, admittedly, the drama associated with the German advance in 1941 was largely absent in the Soviet advance of 1944. This, however, is largely a function of *who* wrote the histories of the war and *why* they wrote them. The fact is, if

one measures the scale of the Soviet advance in 1944 in terms of kilometres covered per day or per week, from late June through July 1944, the Red Army moved through Belorussia about as rapidly as the Germans had in the summer of 1941. While doing so, the Russians also inflicted commensurate damage on the defenders. The most striking difference is that in 1941 the defending Russians recovered; in 1944 the defending Germans did not.

PARTISANS IN THE LIBERATION OF EASTERN EUROPE

The Soviet offensives of 1944 spelled doom for Nazi Germany, especially since it now had to wage war on two fronts. By mid-August 1944, a series of Soviet summer offensives, unfolding one after another, wrought havoc on German forces. The Red Army advanced to the East Prussian borders, bottled up 50 German divisions in the Baltic region, penetrated to Vyborg in Finland, and thrust through eastern Poland to the banks of the Vistula River opposite the smouldering remnants of Warsaw, the once proud Polish capital. In the central sector of the Soviet–German front, Red Army forces had advanced over 650 kilometres (nearly 400 miles) in only six weeks. In the south, a fresh Soviet attack, which began on 20 August, resulted in the conquest of Rumania by the end of the month. With the collapse of Rumania, the critical Ploesti oilfields, the only major source of natural oil for the Nazi armies, fell into Soviet hands. This operation abruptly terminated the dream of Marshal Antonescu, the Rumanian leader, and his generals to form a ‘Greater Rumania’ extending from the Dnestr River to the Volga and the Caucasus. In the wake of the Rumanian fiasco, on 26 August Bulgaria formally withdrew from the war, and Germans hastily abandoned the country. In September Finland too gave up and turned on the German troops that refused to evacuate its territory.¹⁷³

With Soviet armies plunging deep into Central Europe and the Allies crossing Germany’s western frontier, the outcome of the war was certain. Now the Soviet political leadership began thinking more in terms of the post-war European and global political situation. As described by one Western observer, the Soviet goal now ‘was rapidly expanded from the defeat of Germany into the conquest of Eastern Europe’.¹⁷⁴ The Stavka now formulated a new mission for its battle-hardened veteran partisans, some of whom had already seen service in German-occupied lands other than the Soviet Union. Envisaging the

possible active use of Soviet partisans abroad, as early as spring 1944, the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolshevik) invited representatives of the Communist parties of Rumania, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia to the Ukrainian Headquarters of the Partisan Movement. The meeting focused on co-ordinating the operations both by local partisans and Soviet partisans in these countries and, more important still, determining how both groups would co-ordinate with the advancing Red Army.¹⁷⁵

A significant number of Soviet citizens lived outside the Soviet borders during wartime, and many of these actively participated in numerous partisan formations and saboteur groups formed in France, Poland, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Italy and other countries. In total, more than 40,000 Soviet citizens joined partisan formations or underground organisations in these countries.¹⁷⁶ For example, about 25,000 Soviet partisans fought in Poland and Czechoslovakia.¹⁷⁷ A great number of these perished as Resistance fighters, and some have even become national heroes of the countries they fought in and for, including M. Gusein-Zade in Yugoslavia, F. Poletaev in Italy, and V. Porik in France.¹⁷⁸ The Italian historian M. Galleni claimed that Soviet citizens in Italian partisan units were in the very midst of the fighting and did not spare their lives in the struggle against the Fascists.¹⁷⁹ The same occurred in Slovakia, where many Soviets joined the Slovak national resistance movement.¹⁸⁰

The Stavka dispatched many Soviet partisan groups of varying size to other Eastern European countries even before the liberation of the Soviet Union was complete. Besides conducting reconnaissance, diversionary, and sabotage activities, these units had the mission of establishing contacts with underground Communist groups and strengthening the nuclei of future pro-Soviet governments in these countries. In 1944 there were 12,000 well-armed Soviet partisans operating in Poland alone (see Maps 19, 20 and 21).¹⁸¹ The most powerful of the Soviet partisan units fighting in Poland was P. P. Vershigora's 1st Ukrainian Partisan Division and other partisan brigades and detachments commanded by I. Banov, L. Berenshtein, V. Karasev, G. Kovalev, M. Nadelin, V. Pelikh, N. Prokopiuk, S. Sankov, and several others.¹⁸² Many of these partisans, together with 600,000 Red Army soldiers, perished in combat on Polish soil. The total military losses of the Soviet Union on foreign soil during the Second World War was more than 1 million men (Soviet military contingents operated on the territory of 13 European and Asiatic countries).¹⁸³

The situation in Poland was extremely tense because of a sharp disagreement between conflicting political factions (and underground armies), who were arguing over the shape of Poland in the future. The Polish exile government in London, headed by Prime Minister Mikolajczyk, was strongly supported by Churchill. On the other hand, Stalin supported the Communist-dominated government which had formed in the Soviet Union and which established its headquarters in Lublin in the wake of the Red Army's July 1944 advance to the Vistula River. Despite these political disputes, in most cases Soviet partisan formations maintained close and friendly links with all of the Polish people.¹⁸⁴

During the summer of 1944, the Stavka sent 24 partisan organisational groups numbering 400 experts in partisan warfare to Slovakia where they helped form, advised, and sometimes fought for the Slovak National Resistance Movement.¹⁸⁵ For example, on 27 August 1944, a Soviet partisan brigade commanded by Hero of the Soviet Union A. Egorov, in close co-operation with Slovak insurgents, liberated the city of Ruzomberok and several nearby towns.¹⁸⁶ However, a simultaneous attempt by Soviet forces to break through the Carpathian Mountain barrier and assist the Slovaks failed, and the Slovak Movement languished in the mountains (see Map 18).

The presence of Soviet partisans in Eastern Europe served as a sort of bridge for arms supplied by the Soviet government to local Communist partisans. In the spring and summer of 1944, the Soviet government sent the Polish partisans 58 trucks, five aircraft, 18 radio stations, 4,270 sub-machine guns, 8,600 rifles, 234 machine guns, 137 anti-tank rifles, and 120 tons of high explosives, ammunition, and foodstuffs.¹⁸⁷ Between September and October 1944, the Slovakian partisans received about 2,000 rifles, 2,082 sub-machine guns, 900 heavy machine guns, 467 light and anti-aircraft machine guns, 256 anti-tank rifles, five mortars, and assorted other weaponry from the Soviet Union.¹⁸⁸

Soviet partisans fighting in other European lands possessed immense war experience. They had endured years of terrible privations, extraordinary sacrifices, unspeakable tragedies, and literally countless losses. Most recalled the terrible battles at Moscow, Odessa, Leningrad, Sevastopol', Stalingrad, Kursk, Kiev, and Minsk. Yet, in the end, they bore the unbearable and somehow they survived. They did so because simple pride drove them on, a pride accompanied by the ardent belief that victory was certain, no matter how long it took.

The war correspondent K. Simonov came close to capturing this

illusive emotion in his poignant short story, 'Night Over Belgrade'.¹⁸⁹ While singing a song to Yugoslav partisans, the story's heroine, Dusia Zheliabova, recalls the long three years of struggle and asks herself, 'Is it possible that, at that time, someone thought or someone knew that in three years' time we would be in this very city [Belgrade]? Is it possible that someone could have guessed this would happen, and someone could have foreseen it?' And from within her, the answer comes, 'Yes, yes, however strange it may seem, but yes. Someone knew, and thought, and guessed, and foresaw. Most likely that is how it was, for otherwise nothing could have come from what occurred during those years.'¹⁹⁰

REFLECTIONS

Evaluating the events of the last war retrospectively with the benefit of over 50 years of hindsight, first, it is necessary to pay tribute to those who fought against Nazism. Soviet partisans and Red Army soldiers waged a war in Eastern Europe, which was predominantly a war of liberation. That war of liberation endured for 14 months, right up to the final defeat of Nazi Germany. Their military feats and other activities exerted a powerful influence on the entire strategic situation in post-war Europe. The Soviet Union emerged from the war a true super-power, but one whose economy and manpower were severely depleted. The gains made by the Soviet Union in the Second World War, though large and visible to the entire world, were achieved at an enormous cost in terms of material losses and human suffering, facts less apparent to foreign eyes. The Soviet partisans too shared considerable credit for these gains. And they paid for their share in blood and suffering.

As the horrible war drew to a victorious end, the war-weary Soviet population anticipated that the heavy-handed dictatorship of Stalin would loosen its powerful and often terrifying grip on the country. However, the Soviet people, who welcomed the unprecedented global prestige of the Soviet Union since 1944 with legitimate pride, were only disillusioned by a rapid return to the sort of cruelty which had almost ruined the country before the war.

NOTES

1. *VOVSS* (1984), p. 211.
2. *VES*, pp. 729–30.
3. Treadgold, *Twentieth Century Russia*, p. 345.
4. *VOVSS* (1984), p. 214.
5. *Sovershenno secretno!*, pp. 670, 671.
6. Armstrong, *Soviet Partisans*, p. 37.
7. Cooper, *The Phantom War*, p. 143.
8. Ziemke, *Stalingrad to Berlin*, p. 19 (note).
9. *Ibid.*
10. Treadgold, *Twentieth Century Russia*, p. 359.
11. *Ibid.*
12. *IVMV*, tom 7 (Moscow, 1976), pp. 117–18.
13. *VOVSS* (1984), p. 215.
14. *IVMV*, tom 5, p. 284.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 290.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 291.
17. *Ibid.*
18. Werth, *Russia at War*, p. 716.
19. N. Makarov, 'KPSS – Organizator vsenarodnoi bor'by na vremennno okkupirovannoi territorii SSSR' [The Communist Party of the Soviet Union – The organiser of the all-peoples' struggle in temporarily occupied Soviet territory], in *Velikaia pobeda Sovetskogo naroda 1941–1945* [The great struggle of the Soviet people (1941–1945)] (Moscow: 'Nauka', 1976), p. 167; *IKPSS*, tom 5, kniga 1, p. 490.
20. Ziemke, *Stalingrad to Berlin*, p. 303.
21. Mountfield, *Partisans*, p. 187.
22. Dmytryshyn, *USSR: A Concise History*, p. 228.
23. Stephenson, *Russia from 1812 to 1945*, p. 436.
24. *VOVSS* (1984), p. 233.
25. Laqueur, *Guerrilla*, p. 233.
26. *Ukrainsky istorichnyi zhurnal* [Ukrainian historical journal], No. 3 (March 1963), pp. 95–9.
27. *Slavyanskije issledovaniia* [Slavic studies] (Leningrad, 1966), p. 141.
28. *IVMV*, tom 7, p. 305.
29. *VOVSS* (1984), p. 247.
30. *Ibid.*
31. *IVMV*, tom 7, p. 300.
32. Mountfield, *Partisans*, p. 187.
33. Cooper, *The Phantom War*, p. 67.
34. As quoted in Heilbrunn, *Partisan Warfare*, p. 69.
35. *Ibid.*
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57. Armstrong, *Soviet Partisans*, p. 150.
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63. Armstrong, *Soviet Partisans*, p. 173.
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71. M. Caidin, *The Tigers are Burning* (Los Angeles, CA: Pinnacle Books, 1980), pp. 156, 157.
72. *IVMV*, tom 7, p. 305.
73. Ziemke, 'Composition and Morale of the Partisan Movement', in Armstrong, *Soviet Partisans*, p. 158.
74. Cooper, *The Phantom War*, p. 64.
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80. *Vsenarodnoe partizanskoe dvizhenie v Belorussii*, tom 2, kniga. 2 (Minsk: Belarus, 1978), pp. 12–13.
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 104. Cooper, *The Phantom War*, p. 142.
 105. Laqueur, *Guerrilla*, p. 210.
 106. Macksey, *Partisans of Europe*, p. 208.
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 112. N. Mikhailov, *Pokoi nam tol'ko snitsia* [Peace to us is only a dream] (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1972) p. 322.
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129. *Niemen*, No. 4 (April 1974), p. 139.
130. Ziemke, *Stalingrad to Berlin*, p. 199.
131. *VOVSS* (1984), p. 248.
132. *VIZh*, No. 3 (March 1965), p. 45. N. E. Falaleev commanded the 4th Belorussian Partisan Brigade. A. S. Semenov and D. I. Diumin led the brigade's 1st and 2nd Detachments, respectively. Both Falaleev and Semenov were relieved in September 1943, ostensibly for their failures in the operation. See A. L. Manaenkov, ed., *Partizanskii formirovaniia Belorussii v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny (iun' 1941–iul' 1944)* [Partisan formations of Belorussia in the Great Patriotic War (1941–1945)] (Minsk: Belarus, 1983), pp. 207–9.
133. As quoted in Armstrong, *Soviet Partisans*, p. 709.
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136. *Ibid.*, p. 56.
137. *Ibid.*
138. *Bitva na Kurskoi duge, 1943* [The Battle in the Kursk bulge, 1943] (Moscow: 'Nauka', 1975), p. 147.
139. *Velikaia Otechestvennaya voina, 1941–1945: Kratkii nauchno-popularnii ocherk* [The Great Patriotic War, 1941–1945: A short scientific-popular survey] (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1970), p. 349. Regrettably, today Zhukov is being criticised by some Russian authors for frequently resorting to massed frontal attacks
140. *VES*, p. 258.
141. G. Zhukov, *Vospominaniia i razmyshleniia* [Remembrances and recollections], tom 2 (Moscow: Novosti, 1974), p. 194.
142. *IVOVSS*, tom 3, p. 468.
143. *Kommunist Belorussii*, No. 9 (November 1973), pp. 68, 69.
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146. *Ibid.*, tom 9, pp. 13–14.
147. *VOVSS* (1984), pp. 307, 308.
148. *IVMV*, tom 9, p. 42; *VOVSS* (1984), p. 310.
149. Ziemke, *Stalingrad to Berlin*, p. 325.

150. *VOVSS* (1984), p. 307.
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155. *IVMV*, tom 9, p. 226.
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164. James F. Dunnigan (ed.), *The Russian Front: Germany's War in the East, 1941–1945* (London: Lionel Leventhal, 1978), p. 58.
165. Heilbrunn, *Warfare in the Enemy's Rear*, p. 152.
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175. J. F. C. Fuller, *The Second World War, 1939–1945* (New York: Duel, Sloan & Pearce, 1949), p. 281, as quoted in Treadgold, *Twentieth Century Russia*, p. 369.
176. *Voina v tylu vraga*, 1-i vypusk, p. 122.
177. *IVMV*, tom 9, p. 230.
178. *Voina v tylu vraga*, 1-i vypusk, p. 122.
179. *VOVSS* (1984), p. 533.
180. M. Galleni, *Sovetskie partizany v italianskom dvizhenii soprotivleniia* [Soviet partisans in the Italian resistance movement] (trans. from Italian) (Moscow: Progress, 1970), pp. 28, 29.
181. G. Gusak, *Svidetel'stvo o slovatskom natsional'nom vosstanii* [Witnesses to the Slovak national uprising] (trans. from Slovakian into Russian) (Moscow: Pravda, 1969), p. 279.

182. *IKPSS*, tom 5, kniga. 1, p. 577.
183. *IVMV*, tom 9, p. 229.
184. *VES*, p. 525.
185. *IVMV*, tom 9, p. 229.
186. *Ibid.*, p. 229.
187. *Ibid.*, p. 230.
188. *O proshlom vo imia budushego. Vtoraia Mirovaia voina: Prichiny, itogi, uroki* [About the past in the name of the future: The Second World War, causes, consequences and lessons] (Moscow: APN, 1985), p. 87.
189. *Ibid.*
190. Konstantin Simonov (1915–79) was a Russian poet, prose writer, playwright, and journalist. As a young war correspondent for the newspaper *Red Star*, Simonov travelled the long road from Moscow to Berlin, passing through Rumania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and Poland. He is the author of poems, anthologies of personal and lyrical verse, film scripts, journalistic articles and literary criticism. He wrote the short story, 'Night Over Belgrade', as a war correspondence at the front, and it was first published in December 1944 in the newspaper *Pravda*. See *The Liberation of Europe*, p. 75 (note).
191. *The Liberation of Europe*, p. 81.

6

Partisan Intelligence Activities

One of the more important military missions partisans performed was the collection of intelligence information on the enemy. This required extreme attentiveness and careful and systematic efforts on the part of partisan units and other Soviet intelligence organs. The partisan intelligence collection effort focused on determining the location of enemy headquarters and units; enemy troop movements, particularly movements to reinforce specific front sectors or to assemble forces for anti-partisan operations; the regrouping of enemy reserves; and the withdrawal of enemy forces to rest areas. To collect their information, partisans employed direct observation, interrogation of German prisoners of war, the capture of staff and private documents, and a network of partisan agents who operated in the enemy rear to gather this information and to accomplish lesser tasks, such as determining German Army unit postal codes.

General histories, particularly those written in the West, have devoted little attention to the intelligence activities of the Soviet Partisan Movement and have instead focused on the more transparent issue of partisan sabotage and demolition operations. Some of the more detailed Western studies have come closer to the truth regarding partisan contributions in this field. Soviet historians and military theorists have mentioned partisan intelligence efforts but have tended to cover the subject in an unsystematic fashion. In the last analysis, both groups of historians embrace widely divergent views. These views range from outright denial of the importance of the partisans' intelligence efforts to an occasional admission that the partisan intelligence structure was an integral part of an elaborate and effective Soviet intelligence collection effort that, in the end, contributed to Soviet victory in the war.

The massive US Air Force study of partisan operations stated:

Nor should the partisans as an intelligence-gathering agency be overlooked. Indeed, this seems to have been one of the major

contributions made by the partisans to the Russian war effort, giving the Soviet High Command invaluable information not only on weak points, gaps, and hinges between units in the German lines, but on German operational plans as well.¹

Other Western authors such as Ziemke, Mavrogordato, Clark, Dixon and Heilbrunn appreciated the effectiveness of the Soviet partisans as a vehicle for intelligence gathering.² The authors of the anthology entitled, *Soviet Partisans in World War II*, also gave high marks to partisan support of Red Army intelligence collection, noting, 'Partisan records captured by the Germans and interrogations of prisoners revealed that the information forwarded by the bands was quite accurate.'³ Other historians, however, such as Macksey and Laqueur, do not share this opinion.⁴ In fact, the latter dismissed the subject, concluding, 'Nor does one know whether the intelligence provided to the Soviet general staff by partisans was of crucial importance. Partisan brigades were not needed for the location and transmission of military intelligence; this could be done by individuals.'⁵ For this reason, this important topic deserves special attention.

EXPECTATIONS AND CAPABILITIES, 1941–42

Partisan intelligence work differed greatly from period to period throughout the existence of the partisan movement. While the Red Army appreciated the value of partisan intelligence throughout the entire war, the partisans' ability to produce it effectively varied depending on the strength and organisation of the movement. Similarly, the Red Army's intelligence needs also varied depending on the fortunes of war. For example, during the initial period of the war, when the Red Army was either on the defensive or retreating, the poorly organised, armed, and equipped partisan formations were not capable of conducting effective reconnaissance. During this period the scope of partisan intelligence collection was extremely limited, a fact known by the Stavka and recognised by subsequent Russian historians.⁶

However, although the partisans' capabilities were clearly limited, the Stavka and other Red Army commands still expected the partisans to produce some intelligence information. For example, an official Red Army order in summer 1941 stated, 'Information must be gathered concerning the enemy, his activities, the configuration and location of his front-line positions, tanks, artillery, air force, other troop units, and the

location of headquarters staffs with all available means and forces at our disposal. This intelligence must be forwarded to Red Army front line units.⁷ Of course, this was a very difficult task to fulfil properly in the circumstances of 1941.

During this period the partisans suffered from two major operational disadvantages. First, few if any partisans had received training in intelligence work, and, second, they lacked the communications means necessary to transmit what information they did acquire back to responsible Red Army headquarters. As first, they had to rely on such crude communications means as foot messengers, carrier pigeons and dogs to transmit their reports. In addition, no mechanisms or systems existed to co-ordinate partisan information gathering or interpret what they gathered. In 1941, as well as in 1942, higher headquarters used messengers to dispatch instructions to partisan units, and many of these perished en route to their designated partisan units. Throughout this period radio communications remained a major bottleneck for the passage of information. For example, in the entire Ukrainian partisan movement in August 1941, there were only two detachments with radio communications to the Soviet rear. This increased to five in September, seven in October, and nine in November and December, clearly an inadequate number. During 1941 and 1942, the same situation prevailed in other German rear-area sectors regarding radio communication between partisan and Red Army forces.⁸

In summing up partisan intelligence efforts in 1941–42, the Russian military historian V. Andrianov noted many shortcomings in this regard. He concluded that Soviet partisans procured intelligence primarily for their own use rather than in the interests of the Red Army. Compounding this problem, quite often Red Army intelligence organs even dismissed partisan intelligence reports as frivolous and unreliable. As a result, they asked the Stavka and other higher headquarters to provide them with the sort of information that could best be obtained by the partisans.⁹

Despite the partisans' obvious difficulties in intelligence collection, they did record some undeniable successes in the field, particularly in the winter of 1941–42 after the Red Army had halted the German juggernaut at Moscow. As German forces reeled back from Moscow in the face of the Soviet counteroffensive, partisan intelligence contributed significantly to the overall Soviet intelligence effort by locating weak spots in the German front, particularly at the boundaries between large army formations. The Red Army used this information to plan sub-

THE SOVIET PARTISAN MOVEMENT, 1941–1944

sequent penetration operations and to exploit local and general offensive successes. Accordingly, a report prepared by German Second Panzer Army stated:

It has become known that the Russians are making extensive use of information obtained from the local inhabitants. Repeatedly, it has been observed that the enemy is accurately informed about the soft spots in our front and frequently picks the boundaries between our corps and divisions as points of attack. The movement of the informants between the front must, therefore, be prevented by all possible means.¹⁰

EXPECTATIONS AND CAPABILITIES, 1943–44

After the activation of the Central Headquarters of the Partisan Movement, partisan intelligence collection and transmission gradually improved. A report prepared by the German Provost Marshal General that covered partisan activity during the period from July 1942 to March 1943 noted this phenomenon. It concluded, 'The number of partisan agents has increased parallel with the reorganisation and strengthening of the bands.'¹¹

As the war progressed and the partisan movement matured to an increasing extent, partisan forces received the mission of providing information not only for the partisan headquarters but also to Red Army commands and, at times, the Stavka itself. This occurred on a large scale during the major Soviet offensives in 1943 and 1944.¹² During preparations for Operation 'Bagration' in Belorussia, the Stavka directly assigned reconnaissance missions to partisan forces to obtain information of use to the four advancing Soviet *fronts*. The ability of Soviet forces to penetrate German defences so easily, to bypass so many German strong points, and to encircle such large German formations without disrupting planned offensive momentum attests to the high quality of Soviet intelligence information. In fact, partisan reconnaissance elements supplied much of this valuable intelligence material. Even the Red Army's official newspaper, *Krasnaia zvezda* [Red star], acknowledged this fact in an article published in October 1944.¹³

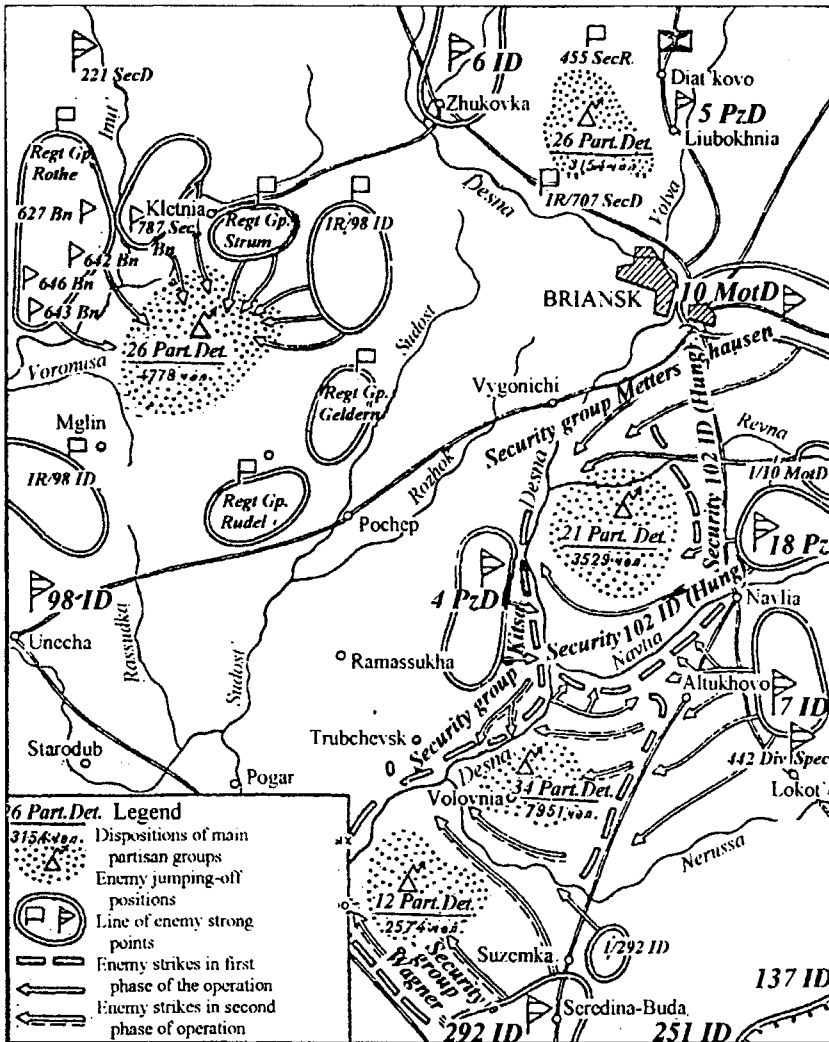
An order issued by Stalin on 19 April 1943 may have represented a watershed in the improvement of partisan intelligence-collection capabilities. Entitled 'Concerning the Improvement of Intelligence Work in Partisan Detachments', the order recognised the new role to be played

by partisan intelligence in providing the Red Army with information. It officially admitted the shortcomings of partisan intelligence before the spring of 1943 by citing the lack of a co-ordinated and well-developed intelligence network. This network failed to exploit such sources as German military units, local nationalist organisations, and various administrative and police offices. When the partisans did obtain intelligence information, in many cases they did not verify its accuracy. Hence, partisan reports were often filled with exaggerations and erroneous data and conclusions.

Stalin demanded radical improvement of the partisan intelligence structure and collection techniques and established the goal of providing the Red Army General Staff with reliable information. Assisted by the CHQPM, the Stavka and General Staff undertook measures to implement Stalin's demands. For example, specially trained intelligence specialists were assigned to command partisan reconnaissance elements, and a major effort was made to supply as many partisan detachments as possible with radios so that information could be transmitted more easily.

Given the severe shortage in partisan units of experienced intelligence specialists, Stalin's order granted permission for the partisan movement to use the Army intelligence officers (GRU) and NKVD agents directly in the partisan formations. This prompted the seconding of many trained intelligence officers to partisan staffs. To improve the relevance and accuracy of intelligence reports, henceforth, unit commanders, commissars and intelligence service heads were to sign them jointly. In addition, partisan unit intelligence chiefs became the second in command (deputy commander) of each partisan formation. Finally, the Army and the partisan movement devoted considerable attention to the development and maintenance of secret agent and messenger networks in all occupied cities and towns.¹⁴ On its own initiative, the Central Headquarters of the Partisan Movement's organised five-day training courses for the chiefs of the republican and district partisan headquarters' reconnaissance divisions. These courses took place in Moscow in June 1943.¹⁵ All of these measures contributed significantly to improvements in the quantity and value of partisan intelligence information.

Throughout 1943 numerous cases illustrate the salutary effects of these measures. For example, prior to a November 1943 Red Army offensive in the Leningrad sector, the reconnaissance section of the 11th Partisan Brigade determined the unit designations and the names of the



Map 7: German plan to destroy partisan forces in the Briansk region, May–June 1943

commanding generals and other officers in 21 large German units. It also revealed the location of the German Eighteenth Army, its XXXVIII Army Corps, and four German airfields in the region.¹⁶ As partisan intelligence collection improved, Red Army army and corps headquarters themselves developed and assigned specific intelligence-gathering missions for the partisans. For example, twice a month the Leningrad Headquarters of the Partisan Movement received special

PARTISAN INTELLIGENCE ACTIVITIES

requests for information from various headquarters subordinate to the Leningrad Front. The Front assigned these missions either by radio or by liaison officers.¹⁷

In spite of these and other special orders and directives regarding the improvement of reconnaissance and the determination of who would perform it, no formal common organisational structure evolved in partisan forces to carry out intelligence collection and processing. Close analysis indicates that the following types of organs engaged in partisan intelligence work:

- (a) Partisan detachments used organic reconnaissance platoons to perform their intelligence missions. In this case, the headquarters of the partisan detachment's parent brigade assigned concrete missions to subordinate reconnaissance platoons and processed the intelligence data they collected;
- (b) Partisan brigades sometimes formed special reconnaissance detachments tasked with providing intelligence to brigade headquarters; otherwise, the brigade received intelligence from separate reconnaissance squads at subordinate detachments and a well-armed and capable reconnaissance company assigned to the brigade itself. In this case, the intelligence efforts of brigades and detachments supplemented one another;
- (c) To better co-ordinate reconnaissance duties, sometimes the partisan brigade headquarters had a small reconnaissance group, and each subordinate detachment, a reconnaissance platoon. This organisation permitted the brigade headquarters to control critical information received from subordinate detachments and transmit it to the next higher headquarters. Regardless of organisation, the normal depth of reconnaissance missions was 15–20 kilometres for detachments and 50–100 kilometres for brigades.¹⁸

Although partisan forces often conducted reconnaissance in unconventional and even primitive fashion, it was not necessarily ineffective. In addition, partisan intelligence scouts [*razvedchiki*] were not usually properly equipped for their duties. They lacked sufficient binoculars, telescopes, topographical maps, radio stations, and other equipment regarded as necessary for intelligence collection. In his work entitled *Combatting Soviet Guerrillas*, Ernst von Dohnanyi described an episode typifying partisan methods of intelligence collection which can be con-

sidered as a common method of procuring information circa 1941 and 1942. This incident occurred in the Briansk District in 1942. A group of Germans who were returning from a reconnaissance mission into the forests surprised a man lying under a tree about 100 metres in front of the woods. Startled by the crack of a dry branch, the man jumped to his feet, saw the Germans, and ran, only to be brought down by several bursts of machine gun fire. Suddenly, a second man, who had gone unnoticed so far, jumped down from the tree and raised his hands. It was later determined that both men were partisans fulfilling a reconnaissance mission to observe traffic on the nearby road. Both men were also serving as part of a sentry post whose mission was to notify the partisan camp deep in the forest of approaching danger.¹⁹

Once partisan scouts obtained information, they transmitted it to higher headquarters by a wide variety of means. These included pre-arranged sound or light signals, various tunes played on small horns or bugles, patterns or figures made from stones or other materials placed beside the road, and burning lamps placed on the window-sills of nearby huts or *izbas* [peasant cottages]. In many cases, partisan units left intelligence reports under stumps, in the hollows of trees, and in other hiding-places until they had time or an opportunity to transmit the data to higher headquarters.²⁰

DETECTING GERMAN PREPARATIONS FOR CHEMICAL WARFARE

One of the more surprising and potentially critical partisan intelligence coups was their discovery of German preparations for waging chemical warfare against both them and the Red Army. In spite of Allied warnings to Nazi Germany not to employ chemical weapons, the German leadership never fully abandoned the temptation of using potentially devastating gas attacks on the Soviet–German front. Thus, the Soviet population faced the constant threat of chemical warfare throughout the war, and, as a result, the detection of any indicators of an impending chemical threat remained a priority mission of all Soviet intelligence organs.

Accordingly, the Soviet field regulations for partisans entitled *Manual for the Partisan Intelligence Scout*, a copy of which the Nazis captured in late 1942, contained sharp warnings about the likelihood of chemical war. A special paragraph devoted to the subject spelled out partisan responsibilities, stating:

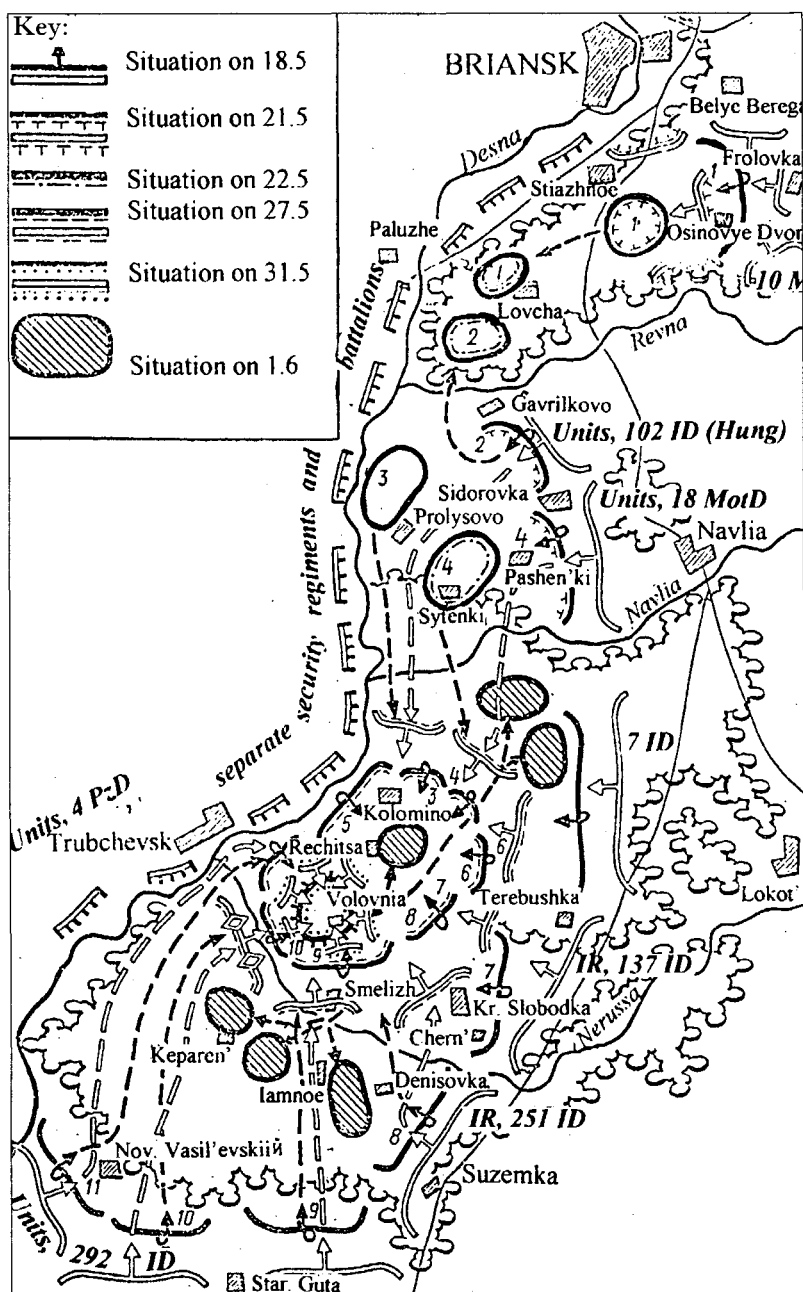
PARTISAN INTELLIGENCE ACTIVITIES

Remember that the enemy is preparing for chemical warfare against us; distinguish between tank cars and other cars moving on the railroads; observe carefully the unloading of chemical warfare materials from the cars, motor vans, etc. Note the markings on the means of transportation. A yellow elephant signifies the presence of poison gas, which is packed either in glass ampoules, which resemble aerial bombs, or in balloons, kegs, etc. . . . Attempt to obtain samples of the enemy's chemical warfare materials (chemical bombs, shells, mines, bullets, gas masks, anti-gas protective covers, etc.). Supplementary information about the enemy can be obtained from a large number of sources of a non-military nature, including:

- (1) Orders of the day, and enemy decrees and staff correspondence;
- (2) Envelopes, letters, and cover letters with APO [army post office] numbers;
- (3) Pay books and identification disks; and
- (4) Registration papers for heavy and light tanks, automobiles, motorcycles, etc.²¹

Partisan intelligence reports included information on the location of several chemical-weapons depots in the German rear area. Understanding that there was no guarantee the Germans would not employ these weapons, several times in 1943 and the summer of 1944 partisan headquarters warned detachment personnel to be ready for gas attacks and sent them instructions on how to use potential means of protection. At the same time, partisan central headquarters instructed partisan intelligence organs to seek out whatever information they could on German chemical capabilities. Specifically, this included the identification of chemical units, their movement, the types of chemical weapons at each depot, markings on chemical munitions, and any other information which could be used to assess German preparations for chemical warfare. At first sight, some of the subsequent partisan reports seemed of little significance. For example, on 24 January 1944, partisan fighters in Vitebsk District seized in combat an identification card belonging to a German private 1st class assigned to the 4th Chemical Group, 51st Chemical Regiment. In February 1944, scouts from a partisan unit near Minsk reported the arrival in the village of Antonovo of the German 113th Chemical Company, which was apparently equipped with gas.²²

THE SOVIET PARTISAN MOVEMENT, 1941-1944



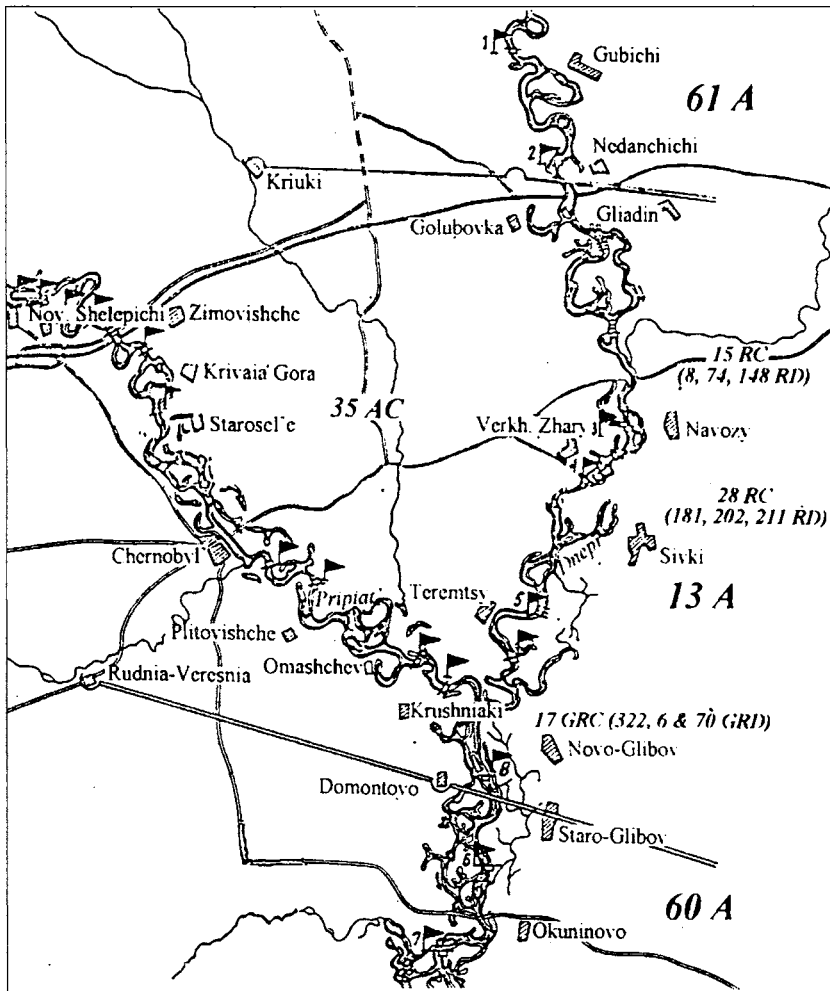
Map 8: Defensive actions of the Briansk partisans, May-June 1943

Considered in isolation, each bit of chemical information may have seemed irrelevant, inconsequential, or even frivolous to intelligence gatherings. Taken together, however, they formed a valuable and credible mosaic as demonstrated by the following episode. Unless one was able to capture German manuals or regulations for chemical warfare, it was very difficult to determine the system by which the Germans classified and marked their chemical munitions. No one was able to capture the critical regulation. However, driven by special directives from above, in the winter and spring of 1944, partisan intelligence did the tedious and systematic work necessary to determine the German chemical munitions-marking system. That system used the colour yellow for blister gases, blue for irritants, green for choking gases, and white for tear gases.²³ Furthermore, from September 1943 to January 1944, by means of intense intelligence activity, the Central Headquarters of the Partisan Movement's intelligence directorate received information on 22 Nazi chemical depots in the occupied Soviet territories. By June 1944 their counterparts in the Belorussian Central Partisan Headquarters used intelligence data from the partisan formations to construct a map indicating 15 chemical depots located in Army Group Centre's rear area and sent this map to appropriate Red Army commands.²⁴

On several occasions, at great personal risk, partisan detachments attacked the enemy chemical depots and managed to destroy some of the chemical equipment. It is unclear, however, whether they did so on their own volition or by order of higher commands. For example, in the spring of 1944, partisan scouts of the Vitebsk District of Belorussia, together with Party underground fighters, attacked a German chemical dump and burned down several buildings, in the process destroying a number of gas cylinders and about 12,000 gas-masks.²⁵

Regardless of the tasks they performed, in order to fulfil their demanding position, intelligence personnel required special personal qualities, skills, and expertise. Officially in the eyes of those who selected them, these personnel not only had to be intelligent, bold, and decisive, but they also had to have detailed knowledge of the local terrain and, preferably, they had to have relatives or good friends among the indigenous population. Those who met these criteria would contribute to sound and flexible partisan intelligence.²⁶

THE SOVIET PARTISAN MOVEMENT, 1941-1944



Map 9: Crossing sites over the Dnepr and Pripjat' rivers north of Kiev prepared by partisan forces in September 1943

PARTISAN INTELLIGENCE MISSIONS

The missions partisan intelligence performed varied considerably depending on the specific aims of each partisan operation. When a partisan force planned an attack on an enemy garrison, reconnaissance missions concentrated on determining the garrison's strength and arma-

ments, defence and security systems (the location of ambushes, sentries, and guard houses), communication nodes and networks, and the best locations from which covering groups could provide supporting fire. They also paid considerable attention to determining the best approach and withdrawal routes to and from the objective for the attacking combat groups.

Partisan leaders well understood that, as a rule, German garrisons were well organised and often prepared for prolonged all-round defence. Furthermore, they normally maintained close radio and wire communications links with neighbouring garrisons. For those reasons, successful attack was possible only if the partisans struck the enemy garrison quickly and by surprise. Indecisiveness or procrastination on the part of partisan commanders or slow and irresolute tactics inevitably resulted in failure since they increased the Germans' chances of reinforcement by higher commands or by neighbouring units. This also placed a premium on accurate and painstaking reconnaissance by partisan staffs. For example, the '*Imeni Voroshilova*' [In the name of Voroshilov] Partisan Detachment received an order to attack the German garrison in the town of Domachevo, in the Brest District of Belorussia, on 23 November 1943. The partisan detachment then spent 20 days reconnoitring the objective before the actual attack.²⁷ During its detailed reconnaissance, the detachment's intelligence platoon focused on determining enemy strength and weaponry, his defensive system, the number of security personnel on duty at night, and the most advantageous approach and withdrawal routes to and from the objective.²⁸ These careful measures paid off since the partisans destroyed 5 Nazi food warehouses and several trucks during the attack.

Another critical partisan intelligence mission regarded the timing and strength of German anti-partisan operations. In this case, partisan intelligence organs focused on determining German intentions, the number and strength of units taking part in the operation, types of weapons to be employed, and whether any armour, artillery, or air support was planned. If the situation permitted and proper information was available, partisan intelligence organs were also to provide information concerning the German anti-partisan plan, specifically, regarding the German tactical scheme of manoeuvre. It was important to determine whether the Germans intended to conduct an encirclement, an envelopment, or a double encirclement, or if the Germans intended to drive the partisans into a specific pre-planned area where they could annihilate them.

[illegible]

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As the date of an anti-partisan operation neared, partisan intelligence organs constantly refined their intelligence data. This was especially crucial so that partisan commanders could select the most effective counter-measure suited to unique terrain characteristics and his available forces. For example, on 2 September 1943, partisan scouts in the Minsk and Mogilev Districts of Belorussia managed to obtain information concerning German plans to organise an anti-partisan operation in the winter of 1943–44 aimed at the complete annihilation of partisan fighters in the Mogilev District. This enabled local partisan commands to avoid destruction. Likewise, at the end of December 1943, intelligence scouts from the *'Imeni Frunze'* [In the name of Frunze] Partisan Brigade were working at the Ratomka railway junction (about 20 kms north-west of Minsk). They were able to determine that the Germans planned to conduct an operation in their region from 1 to 15 January 1944. They also informed their brigade headquarters that the Germans were unloading heavy artillery and a tank unit at the station, preparatory to the operation.²⁹ In yet another example, on 22 February 1944, scouts from the *'Burevestnik'* Partisan Brigade successfully ambushed a group of German staff officers near the town of Uzda in Minsk District, and captured 7 Germans, along with a complete copy of a plan for a contemplated anti-partisan operation.³⁰ In fact, high-ranking German officials admitted that partisan intelligence was sometimes successful in obtaining information on planned anti-partisans operations.³¹

During partisan demolition operations against the German rail and highway network, partisan intelligence organs were responsible for providing details of German defences along the communications artery. This included the dispositions, strength, and weaponry of security forces and the nationality of their personnel (whether Czechs, Slovaks, Hungarians, Germans, or indigenous people). They also sought to determine the location and movement of enemy security patrols, the best avenues of approach and withdrawal to the sabotage points, and movement timetables of enemy trains, motor transport columns, and units that used the artery.

If the Germans successfully blocked or encircled a large partisan region, as was often the case in large scale anti-partisan operations, the principal mission of partisan reconnaissance forces was to provide precise information on the size and location of each enemy blocking force. Sometimes, they infiltrated through the defences of the encircling enemy units to observe roads and nearby villages to find out if the enemy was being reinforced. If the enemy was being reinforced, the partisan

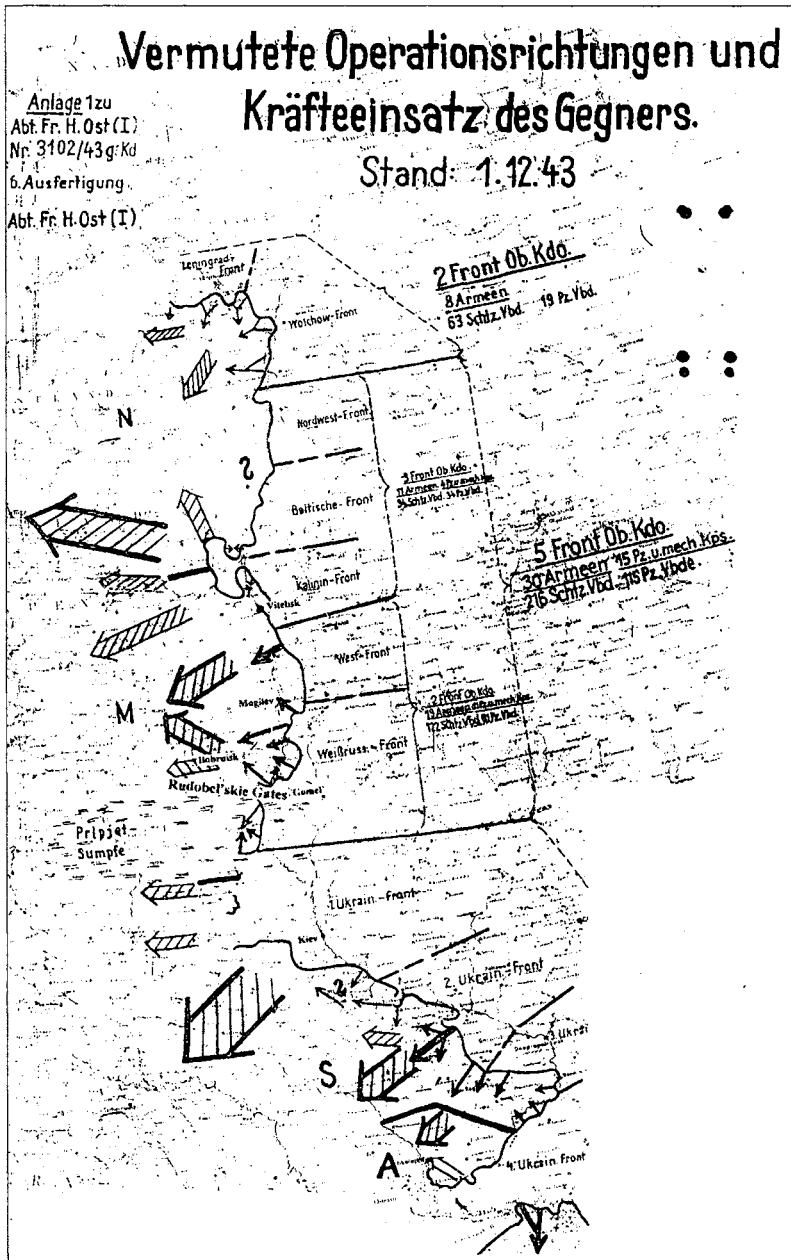
scouts were expected to mine or otherwise block the reinforcement routes.

THE USE OF AGENTS AND INFORMERS

In addition to information obtained by partisan intelligence organic to partisan brigades and detachments, partisan forces and Red Army units received considerable intelligence information from numerous secret agents deployed into the enemy rear, either operating in deep cover or as diversionary teams. These included agents under NKVD (Ministry of Internal Affairs), Army (GRU – Main Intelligence Directorate), or even partisan control (see Map 21). The Soviet network of secret-service operatives in the German rear was highly complex and quite dangerous for the individual agent. This was so because agents often worked directly in and for German-controlled enterprises, local administrative organs, and various anti-Soviet organisations. Apparently, in towns and cities, local partisans and the partisan movement also relied on agents that they themselves recruited or whom they inserted from the outside. In the countryside, partisan agents often worked independently, but frequently they were used collectively to provide more reliable information. Partisan agents were important since they procured intelligence information for the NKVD as well as for the partisan movement and the Red Army. The NKVD relied on partisan agents to provide information about political and economic conditions in the occupied lands, the organisation of the German administration, and the reaction of the indigenous population to the measures adopted by Nazi occupation authorities.

By 1 November 1943, the Stavka had sent 196 wireless (radio) operators to occupied Belorussian territory to assist in the fashioning of a more reliable agent network in the region and to obtain more timely intelligence information. It also dispatched to the western parts of the republic 11 special ‘initiation’ groups whose mission was to form and control agent networks.³² Largely due to their work, by the end of 1943, a centralised partisan intelligence radio network was operating throughout all of Belorussia. It was able to provide an immense volume of intelligence information directly to the Central Headquarters of the Partisan Movement, to its Belorussian branch, and to the intelligence directorate and departments of individual Red Army *fronts* and armies.³³

Admittedly, it is very difficult to determine precisely the contributions



Map 11: The Soviet-German front on 1 December 1943 and the 'Rudobel'skie Gates' (a German assessment)

made by the partisan agent network to the Soviet war effort. However, fragmentary data, including numerous Soviet documents and captured German reports, indicates that the agents were, in the main, efficient and achieved considerable success in their shadowy endeavours. Just a few examples will suffice. In one such case, in May 1944 a female agent named Mrs. Popkov managed to steal a copy of a German plan showing the location of important German military objectives around the city of Evpatoriia in the Crimea. She subsequently turned this plan over to representatives from the 4th Ukrainian Front's headquarters.³⁴ Similarly, in January 1944 in the northern sector of the Soviet–German front near Leningrad, an agent, Ivan Kuzov, procured copies of the defensive plan and the disposition of German units in and around the city of Luga.³⁵

Circumstances compelled many partisan secret agents to pretend to be traitors, and this often had certain negative consequences. Obviously, the local population hated them and, in some instances, threatened to kill them. In many cases, partisan agents were killed by locals or by members of the Party underground simply because they were not aware of whether the individual was in reality an agent of partisans, the Red Army, or of the NKVD intelligence organs.

During the final two years of the war, the collection and processing of agent intelligence information by central authorities became much more efficient. For example, the Belorussian State Archives contains an official report prepared by the Brest District Party committee, dated September 1943, concerning the state of affairs in the field of intelligence gathering. This report details the number of agents who were successfully infiltrated into all segments of the Nazi occupation apparatus. The infiltrated agents included 21 in transport organs, nine in industrial facilities, nine in economic organisations, 20 in police units, 12 in national anti-Soviet and military organisations, and, perhaps most critical, three in German counter-espionage organs. In Brest itself and in the nearby Antipol' region, partisan agents even took an active role in preparing for the demolition of an aerial bomb depot and oil reservoirs.³⁶

The main criterion used to select partisan intelligence agents included a keen knowledge of local conditions and the ability to remain as inconspicuous as possible. For that reason, the partisans often used women, very old men, children, and even cripples and other physically handicapped people as agents. Thus, a partisan captured in May 1942 by the 83rd German Infantry Division declared that his partisan formation employed 20 women as agents.³⁷

PARTISAN INTELLIGENCE ACTIVITIES

For German occupation authorities, the proliferation of partisan intelligence agents posed a significant problem, with which they attempted to deal in several ways. The most prevalent method was to restrict the movement of the civilian populace, especially at night and in areas close to the front. In army group rear areas, German authorities prohibited the indigenous population from leaving populated or built-up areas, particularly during the hours of darkness. They also forbade the populace from approaching railway lines, establishing a prohibited zone usually one kilometre wide on both sides of the railway embankment.

If these measures tended to restrict active popular support of partisan agents, they did not deter other forms of co-operation. Many informants from the indigenous population actively assisted the partisans in their intelligence gathering. Frequently, people recruited as informants for the partisan intelligence network were required to swear that they would staunchly fight against the enemy and would be a reliable source of information. To this end, partisan units developed a special oath called the 'Pledge of Partisan Intelligence Informants'. By taking this oath, an informant pledged to the intelligence organs that he or she would:

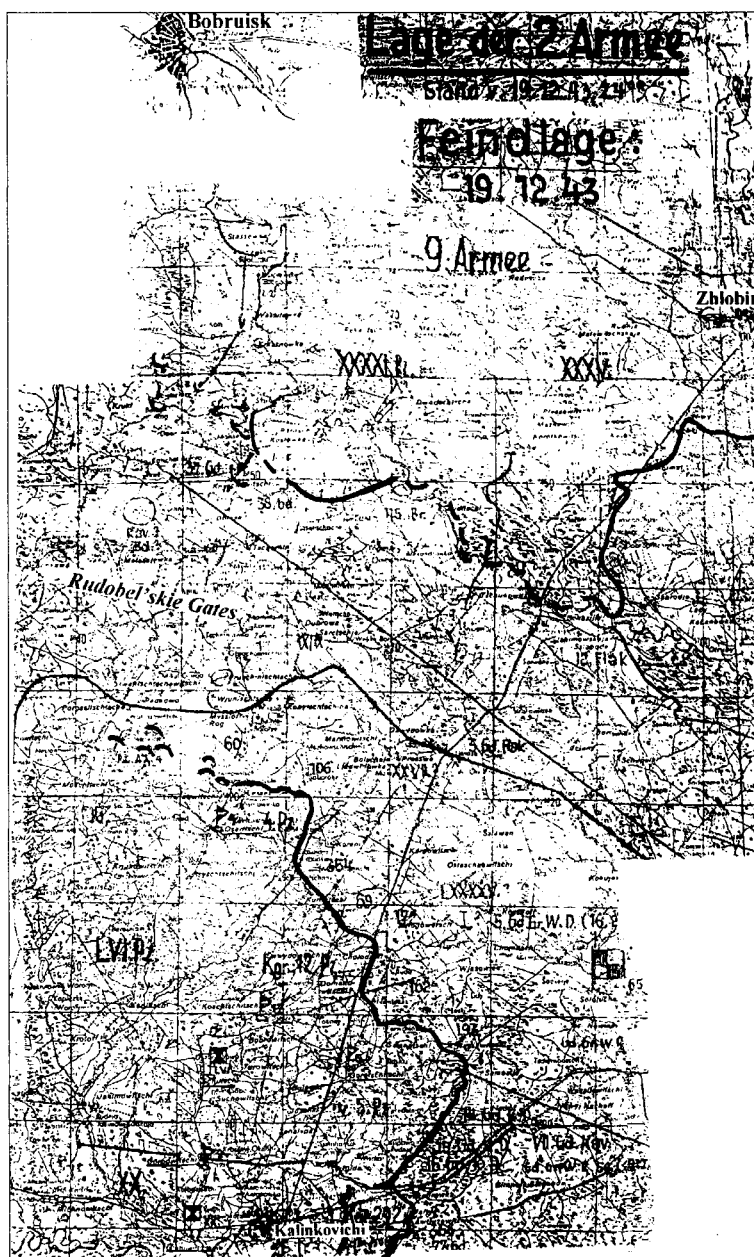
- (1) Report all persons and groups who engaged in espionage against the Red Army and the partisan movement;
- (2) Report all observations of the enemy and his equipment;
- (3) Discharge honestly and promptly all missions assigned to me by the officer-in-charge of the partisan intelligence section;
- (4) Talk to no one about my connections with the intelligence section; and
- (5) Sign all reports made by me under the cover name of '[. . .]' in order to maintain complete security of the information.

This oath finished with a imposing statement, 'If I do not discharge the mission entrusted to me, I shall be shot.'³⁸

Among their many contributions, these partisan agents and informants played an indispensable role in revealing the precise nature of the German highway and railroad system that was so critical to the movement and transport of troops and military material.³⁹

The official reports of some partisan headquarters maintained in the archives indicate that some partisan formations employed an imposing number of intelligence agents. For example, by 1 February 1944, the Baranovichi regional partisan headquarters in Belorussia employed the services of 500 agents. At the same time, the 13 partisan brigades that operated in this region received information from 408 agents, who

THE SOVIET PARTISAN MOVEMENT, 1941-1944



Map 12: The 'Rudobel'skie Gates' south of Bobruisk, 19 December 1943 (a German Assessment)

reported directly to the heads of the brigades' reconnaissance sections. In addition, another 270 agents reported to the heads of NKVD special sections, and 100 reported to various other agencies in the headquarters. Finally, 72 agents worked in the headquarters' long-range intelligence service.⁴⁰

From April to September 1943, the most powerful partisan formations in the Ukraine, specifically those commanded by S. Kovpak, A. Saburov, A. Fedorov, M. Naumov, N. Popudrenko and A. Grabchak, recruited a total of 572 intelligence agents.⁴¹ The Belorussian Headquarters of the Partisan Movement claimed that the total number of partisan agents who operated in German-occupied Belorussian territory throughout the entire war totalled about 24,000.⁴² While this figure is impressive, it should be treated very cautiously. The fact is that not all of these people were 'master spies'. This figure includes many people who were in no way qualified to provide accurate information and many others who agreed to provide information after being intimidated by the partisans or local underground Party functionaries. A certain percentage of these supposed agents also were women, juveniles and young girls who lacked any qualifications for gathering such information. German intelligence estimated the total number of Soviet agents operating in the German-occupied territories to be around 13,000 persons, half of the Soviet estimate. These divergent figures are understandable, since the Germans only counted qualified Soviet agents who had received special training and were then implanted into different elements of the German occupation apparatus. In the case of either figure, the number of agents was indeed imposing. Even though they cited a lower figure than claimed by the Soviets, German intelligence estimated that, during 1943 and 1944, 80 per cent of the information that Soviet commands and intelligence organs received from the occupied territories came via secret intelligence agents.⁴³

Regardless of which figure is correct, what is surprising was the relatively low percentage of Communist Party members among the ranks of the partisan agents. For example, in Belorussia Party members made up only about 4 per cent of the total.⁴⁴ However, both the Germans and the Soviets considered this 4 per cent to be the most reliable agents and the most devoted to the struggle with the Nazis, especially in critical situations.⁴⁵ German counter-espionage organs experienced considerable difficulties in rooting out these agents. In fact, they confessed that, during the entire war, they managed to detect only an estimated 14 per cent of existing Soviet agents.⁴⁶

One of the more arcane and difficult tasks of partisan intelligence organisations was their conduct of counter-intelligence activities. Partisan intelligence organs made strenuous efforts to penetrate the German intelligence structure, primarily to determine the identity of German spies dispatched to infiltrate and then report on the activities of both partisan and Red Army forces. Often partisan agents who penetrated German intelligence had instructions to determine the location, structure, and courses of enemy intelligence schools, to obtain lists of attending students, and to ascertain the specific objectives of agents recruited by the Germans. Further, they were to determine how (i.e., parachute or ground infiltration) and where (i.e., routes of passage and final destination) these agents were to be deployed.

Numerous cases of partisan counter-intelligence operations have now been completely or partially documented. For example, by analysing NKVD documents in the Belorussian national archives, E. Ioffe has found extremely interesting information regarding a group of Soviet secret agents who, in April 1942, were sent into the German rear area to provide data on the Nazi intelligence agent school code-named 'Saturn'. Commanded by Senior Lieutenant E. Fokin, the group was ably assisted by a young Jewish partisan messenger named Rosalia Friedson.⁴⁷ In December 1943 the Belorussian partisan headquarters received rather valuable information from an agent code-named '*Soroka*' [Magpie], who had managed to burrow into the Nazi SD (security service) apparatus in Minsk. In addition to providing information regarding the organisation and disposition of German security-service units, he also provided descriptions of Nazi agents who had infiltrated into partisan formations.⁴⁸

During the same period, agents assigned to the reconnaissance section of partisan forces operating in the Mogilev region were able to establish a working relationship with the deputy chief of the German counter-intelligence group stationed in Mogilev. He passed to partisan headquarters via partisan messengers 37 top-secret documents associated with German intelligence activity in the German-occupied regions of the Soviet Union and Poland. In yet another instance, from November 1943 to January 1944, an interpreter with the Pinsk SD named Shelolitsev-Terskoï provided partisan agents with information about 45 Germans known to be operating in the city of Pinsk and near-by populated areas.⁴⁹

On 27 July 1943 in the Gomel' District, the 263rd Partisan Detachment, commanded by P. E. Matiushkov, attacked the headquarters

PARTISAN INTELLIGENCE ACTIVITIES

of a German unit, captured some staff documents, and took several prisoners, who later provided considerable information. Analysis of the documents and prisoner interrogations revealed the code-names and surnames of 170 German agents who had graduated from the Borisov Special School for Secret Agents and who had parachuted into the Soviet rear area.⁵⁰ During the entire period of German occupation, the Ukrainian partisans' counter-espionage service was able to determine the identity of about 2,000 German agents.⁵¹

On a few occasions, partisan agents even succeeded in recruiting German servicemen into their espionage networks and received important information from them. For example, at the end of 1943, agents from the partisan '*Imeni Dzerzhinskogo*' [In the name of Dzerzhinsky] Partisan Detachment, which operated in the Minsk District of Belorussia, recruited a German signalman from the 537th Signal Regiment. In addition to providing communication support for German Ninth Army, this regiment was responsible for maintaining the strategic cable connecting Berlin with army group headquarters at the front. The cable itself ran along the key Warsaw–Minsk highway. The data provided by the signalman helped to reveal the precise location of many Ninth Army units. More important still, the information he provided on the characteristics of the cable enabled the Soviet Intelligence Service to eavesdrop systematically on telephone conversations of high-ranking German officials.⁵²

THE CREDIBILITY OF PARTISAN INTELLIGENCE DATA

Despite these and other obvious successes in procuring essential intelligence information, the partisans encountered notable problems in the processing of the raw intelligence data. This is not surprising. During the war, the United States experienced similar problems at the highest level, even though it possessed the so-called 'Magic' system. Since the end of 1940, this system had enabled the US government to decode intercepted Japanese cable and wireless messages in Tokyo's most secret ciphers sent to and from Washington. Nevertheless, the US still failed to determine where, how, and exactly when the Japanese would strike. On 6 December 1941, a day before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, US Navy Department intelligence officers prepared their latest report on the location of major Japanese warships. It assessed that most of the ships were in their homeports. Included on the list were all the carriers and

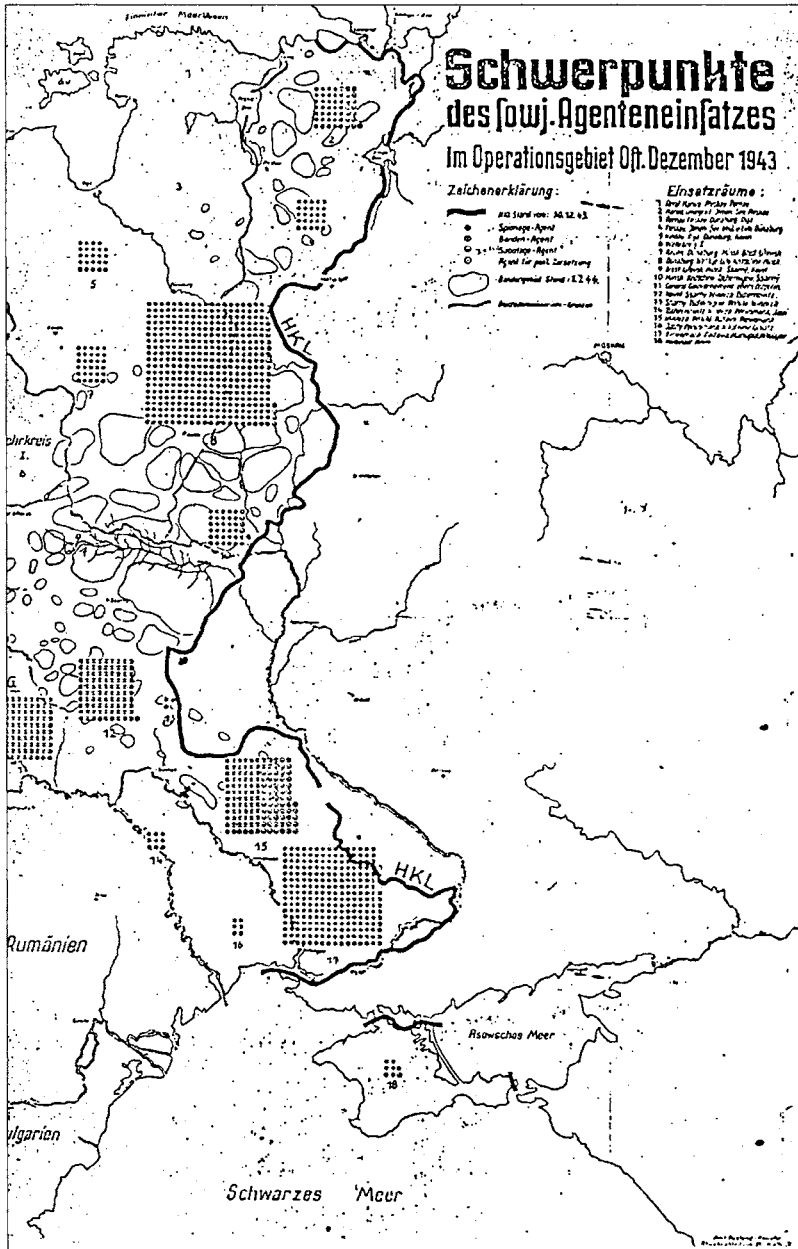
other warships in the task force, which, at that very moment, was steaming to within three hundred miles of Pearl Harbor and was warming up its bombers to attack Pearl Harbor at dawn on 7 December. Although Navy Intelligence notified President Roosevelt and Secretary of State Cordell Hull that the Japanese Embassy was destroying its codes on 6 December, and Roosevelt is said to have exclaimed, 'This means war', the US Pacific Fleet never received warning of the devastating attack.⁵³

Thus, it was understandable that Soviet partisan intelligence repeatedly replicated this error, albeit on a smaller scale. Macksey has pointed out that the partisans erroneously interpreted intelligence indicators in February and March 1943 in the midst of the precipitous westward advance of the Red Army after its dizzying Stalingrad victory. When the Germans suddenly launched a counteroffensive and drove Soviet forces back toward Kursk, Macksey claimed the partisans 'gave neither clear warning nor significant combat assistance' to the Red Army.⁵⁴ Macksey was correct, but only partially so. In fact, Soviet intelligence, including partisan intelligence, informed higher headquarters about the large-scale enemy regrouping. However, the Stavka ignored the warnings and interpreted the German regrouping to be an organised retreat. Instead, the Germans were indeed organising a counter-offensive, and an effective one at that. In this case, Soviet higher headquarters erroneously interpreted the ample intelligence information it received, as even official Soviet publications later acknowledged.⁵⁵ In a report he prepared in September 1943, General F. I. Golikov, the commander of the Voronezh Front, stated categorically that the intelligence information had been misinterpreted.⁵⁶

Later still, when writing his memoirs, Marshal K. K. Rokossovsky, the then commander of the Soviet Central Front, confirmed that the partisans had indeed provided sufficient information about enemy intentions and concentration to deliver the counter-blow. He wrote:

In undertaking such a large scale operation as a deep envelopment of the whole of the enemy's Orel group, GHQ had evidently miscalculated. For by that time the enemy had begun to recover from the body blows received on the Bryansk and Kharkov sectors and had begun to prepare a counter-attack himself. More and more formations had been transferred from the Vyazma-Rzhev grouping to Orel and to the south. Partisans and air reconnaissance had warned us of concentrations of enemy forces in the neighbourhood of Bryansk and troop movements in the direction of Sevsk.⁵⁷

PARTISAN INTELLIGENCE ACTIVITIES



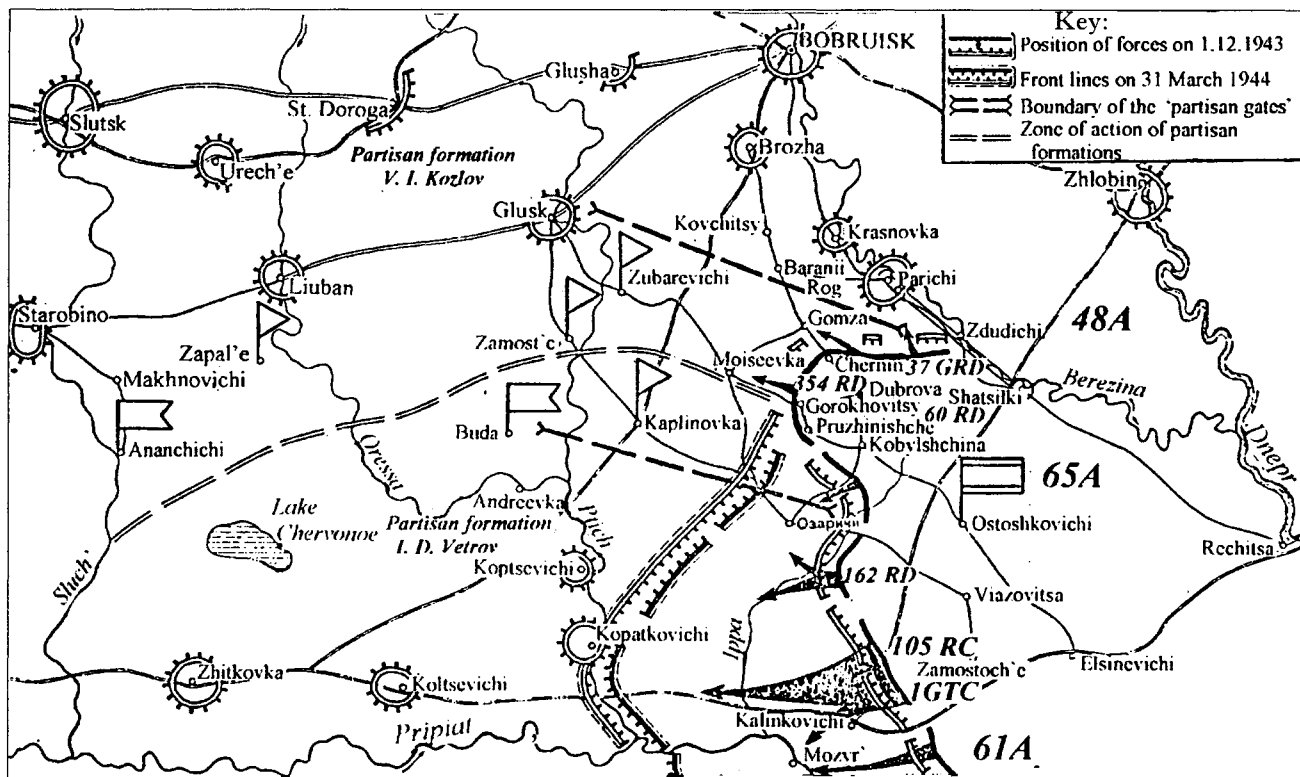
Map 13: German assessment of partisan and agent activity, December 1943

PARTISAN KIDNAPPINGS

One of the most effective methods used by partisan intelligence to obtain reliable information was the kidnapping or capture of German officers or officials, especially high-ranking ones. The partisans then transported their captives, usually by aircraft, to appropriate Red Army and partisan intelligence agencies. The well-known Soviet agent, Nikolai I. Kuznetsov, who acted in close concert with the Ukrainian partisans and underground Party cells, orchestrated several such kidnappings. For example, he masterminded the kidnapping of General Ilgen, who was responsible for German anti-partisan operations in the Ukraine.⁵⁸ Kuznetsov also often masqueraded as a German officer named *Oberleutnant* Kurt Zeibert to gain access to German headquarters in the Ukraine. In the summer of 1943, while performing in his German role, Kuznetsov was said to have penetrated the office of Hitler's High Commissioner in the Ukraine, Erich Koch, from where he heard details about the impending German attack at Kursk. Kuznetsov then passed the information on to the Soviet High Command.⁵⁹

Erich Koch, incidentally, was the most infamous of Hitler's Commissioners in the East. Appointed in September 1941, Koch had a vicious personality, and he was both an ardent Nazi and violently anti-Ukrainian. His policies created a virtual two-year reign of terror in the republic. Many high-ranking Nazis had considered the Ukraine's strategic location as an excellent jumping-off point for further German political penetration into the economically and politically important Central Asia, and the Near and Middle East. Therefore, they hoped Koch's appointment could facilitate that process. However, just the reverse occurred. In fact, Koch's subsequent performance ultimately frustrated Hitler's plans to exploit the Ukraine in any way, shape, or fashion. Now, many historians believe that Koch's rabid anti-Ukrainian sentiments and brutality disillusioned the population, virtually destroyed pro-German popular sentiment, and impelled many Ukrainians to join either nationalist- or Communist-led partisan groups.⁶⁰

Some partisan formations created special groups, each consisting of several dozen physically fit and trained fighters, which were used specifically to kidnap civilian officials or capture German soldiers and seize staff documents. About 90 per cent of the personnel in these groups were young fighters.⁶¹ An order issued on 21 December 1944 by the operations department of the Leningrad Headquarters of the Partisan Movement required each of its subordinate brigades to form and deploy



Map 14: Partisan co-operation with 65th Army, December 1943–March 1944

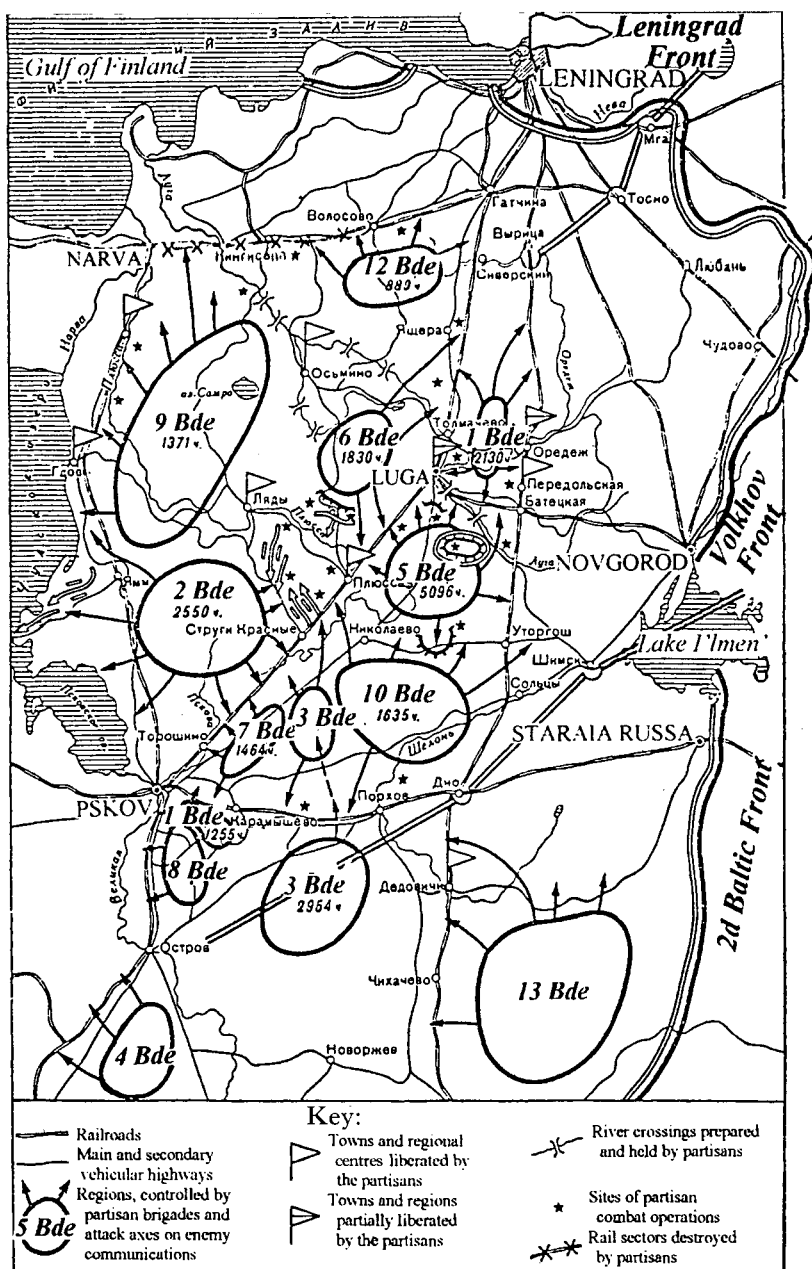
such groups. The order mandated the groups be deployed in the rear area of large German formations.⁶² However, there were many instances when these and like groups were unable to transport their valuable kidnapped civilians or captured soldiers through the front lines to responsible intelligence organs. In this regard, the main obstacle was the shortage of partisan airfields and airstrips. For example, Belorussia was literally infested with partisans in 1944. But, although 83 partisan brigades and 34 separate detachments, a total of 117 formations, were operating in the republic, the partisans had only 10 airfields at their disposal.⁶³ The situation was even worse in other partisan regions.

Nevertheless, the kidnappings and seizures went on. For example, in early 1944 the *'Imeni Z. S. Zaslonovo'* [In the name of Zaslonov] 1st Partisan Brigade, which operated in the Vitebsk District of Belorussia and was commanded by L. I. Selitskiy, had singular success in its seizure programme. A group of partisan scouts commanded by S. Kondratev had traced a German intelligence officer to the village of Velikoe Selo and later kidnapped him. The German officer had been assigned there to organise an intelligence agent's school. Soon after, the brigade's scouts also kidnapped a high-ranking German intelligence officer in the city of Orsha.⁶⁴

During preparations for the 1944 summer offensive, the Red Army command tasked the partisans to reconnoitre the German defence system and send detailed information about it back to *front* and army headquarters. One of the most reliable ways to obtain correct information was to capture enemy soldiers, particularly combat engineer officers, whose units were engaged in the erection of various defensive positions. The partisan effort was successful. They captured several officers and non-commissioned officers assigned to engineer units, interrogated them at the partisan headquarters, and sent them by air to various Red Army intelligence directorates and departments. For example, a German field engineer who was captured by Minsk partisans in spring 1944 provided very valuable information of enemy defences. This engineer officer was directly associated with the construction of the German defensive positions in the central sector of the front in Belorussia, and he possessed many critical documents, such as schemes of important objectives. The partisans airlifted him and his documents to Soviet intelligence units behind the front.⁶⁵

By the spring of 1944, as noted by Stalin in a special order, the Soviet Air Force had achieved air superiority in the East.⁶⁶ However, as they retreated, the Germans created a new network of airfields to replace

PARTISAN INTELLIGENCE ACTIVITIES



Map 15: Partisan combat operations during the Leningrad-Novgorod offensive, January 1944

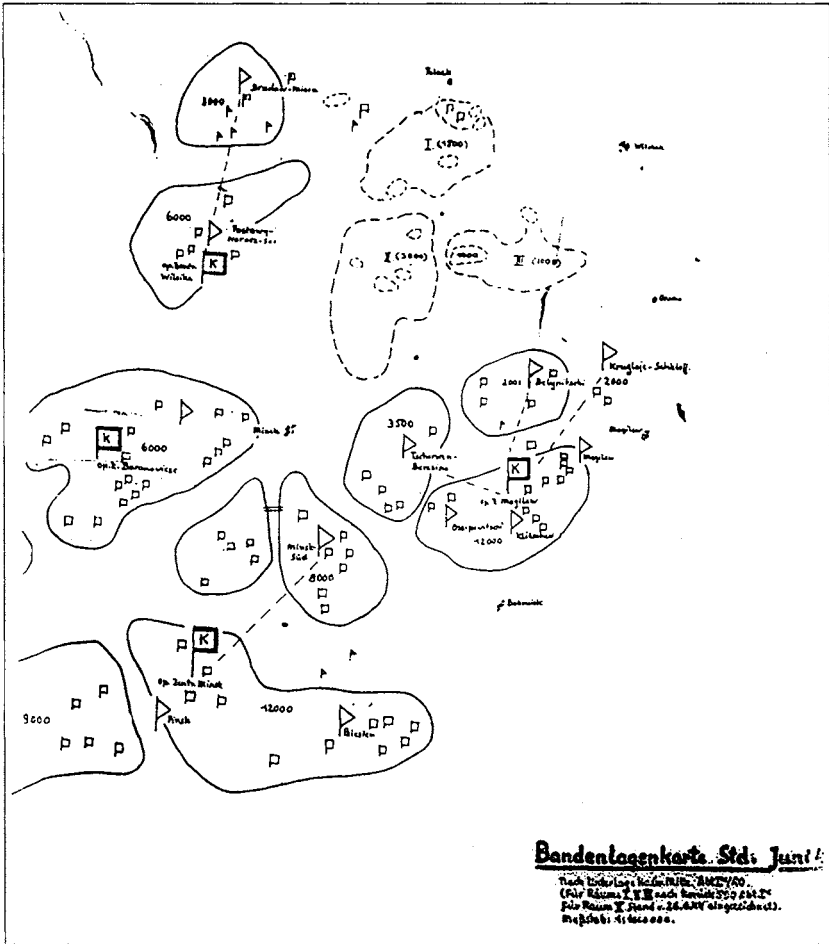
those that they had been forced to abandon. In order to maintain their air superiority, it was essential that the Soviet Air Force learn the location of new German airfields so that they could attack them successfully. Therefore, the Air Force turned to the partisans for assistance in airfield identification. For example, on 6 March 1944, Major-General P. Braiko, the 16th Air Army chief of staff, asked for such assistance from the Belorussian partisans. In response to his request, scouts from the Baranovichi partisan unit captured the principal German engineer officer engaged in the construction of the new German airfield at Lida. The partisans turned the German specialist over to the Baranovichi underground Party committee, where his interrogation produced valuable information on the Lida airfield's defences.⁶⁷ Frequently, after they located and reconnoitred new enemy airfields, partisan headquarters sent direct requests to Air Force units to make bombing attacks on the newly identified installations.⁶⁸

The same programme to capture enemy soldiers also helped Soviet intelligence identify regrouping German reserves. For example, on 10 June 1944, partisan scouts from the Mogilev District captured a German soldier from the German 60th Motorised Division, which was moving into Belorussia from the Baltic region. As a result of partisan interrogation, it became clear that the division had come to Belorussia only for rest and refitting before its final transfer to the Ukraine, where the Germans expected the main Soviet attack to occur in the summer of 1944. This fortuitous event confirmed to the Stavka that its strategic deception plan was working, specifically, that the Germans expected the main Soviet attack in the summer to be in the Ukraine. In this instance, General S. Shtemenko, chief of the General Staff's Operations Directorate, highly praised the partisans' efforts.⁶⁹

PARTISAN DISRUPTION OF GERMAN 'SCORCHED-EARTH' POLICIES

The partisans also played a considerable role in undermining German efforts to implement their 'scorched earth' policy. According to this declared policy, as they retreated the Germans had been ordered to demolish anything of value, including important industrial enterprises, government offices, and historic and cultural monuments. Sometimes they even blew up entire blocks of flats. To reduce the horrible effects of this Nazi policy, the Stavka ordered partisan intelligence to collect infor-

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Map 16: German assessment of Soviet partisan activity in Belorussia, June 1944

mation, primarily documents, concerning the mining of important objectives, including data on high-explosive charges, the location of demolition charges, etc. The partisans responded and recorded some modest achievements. For example, on 26 January 1944, partisan intelligence informed appropriate headquarters about the planned mining of a chemical plant in Bykhov (in Mogilev District) and two pump-houses in Zhodino (in Minsk District). Soon after, on 24 March partisan intelligence warned about the planned demolition of a power station and three plants in Borisov and on 22 May of a railway bridge near the town of

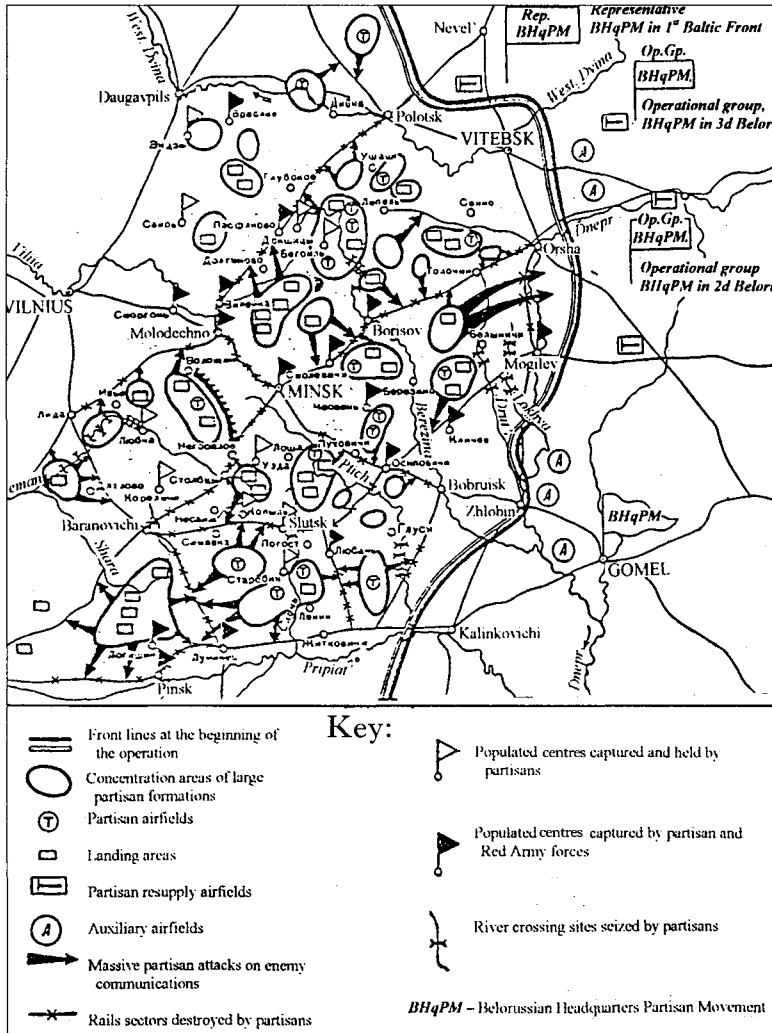
Stol'btsy.⁷⁰ After intelligence organs processed this information, it usually sent it to army units who were responsible for taking concrete measures to prevent the demolitions. For example, in March 1944 the intelligence department of the Belorussian Headquarters of the Partisan Movement sent several intelligence reports to Army GRU organs in the headquarters of the 1st Baltic and 1st, 2nd and 3rd Belorussian Fronts about planned German mining operations. These reports resulted in the saving of many important industrial enterprises. In Minsk, for example, although the Germans mined the Government House, the Opera and Ballet Theatre, and several houses used by German senior officers, in the long run, all of these objectives were saved. In a practical sense, this information permitted either partisan bands or lead elements of advancing Soviet troops to reach the objectives before the Germans could set off the demolition charges.⁷¹

RECONNAISSANCE OF GERMAN DEFENCES

Partisan intelligence also contributed significantly to detecting new defence lines and defensive positions that the Germans were erecting to hold off the expected Soviet onslaught in 1944. In the spring of 1944, the Germans knew that major Soviet offensive action was inevitable. Therefore, the Germans concentrated their efforts on constructing imposing new defence lines, defensive positions, and obstacles across the breadth of the Soviet–German front. Quite naturally, Soviet commands wanted detailed information about these defences. While Soviet intelligence organs conducted extensive aerial photography, they also relied heavily on information provided by secret agents and by partisan intelligence. In turn, the partisans relied heavily on information provided by members of the indigenous population, who were dragooned by the Germans into constructing these defences. In this case, the Germans' desperate need for labourers eased the partisans' task. Partisan intelligence organs simply sent many agents in the guise of construction workers to work on these installations and find out all they could about them.

Using this method, in early 1944 the reconnaissance section of the '*Chekist*' (NKVD Agent) Partisan Brigade, which was operating in the Mogilev District, succeeded in preparing a detailed plan of German defensive fortification along the Dnepr River. It then submitted this plan to the 3rd Belorussian Front's intelligence directorate, where it was most

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Map 17: Partisan actions during the Belorussian operation

welcome. An official report of the *front's* Military Council called this intelligence data 'very important'.⁷² By late June 1944, the intelligence department of the Belorussian Partisan Central Headquarters had prepared a very detailed map of all known defensive positions in German Army Group Centre's rear area, which it then submitted to appropriate Red Army commands.⁷³ The partisan intelligence-collection effort prior to Operation 'Bagration' was very impressive. Overall, during 1944

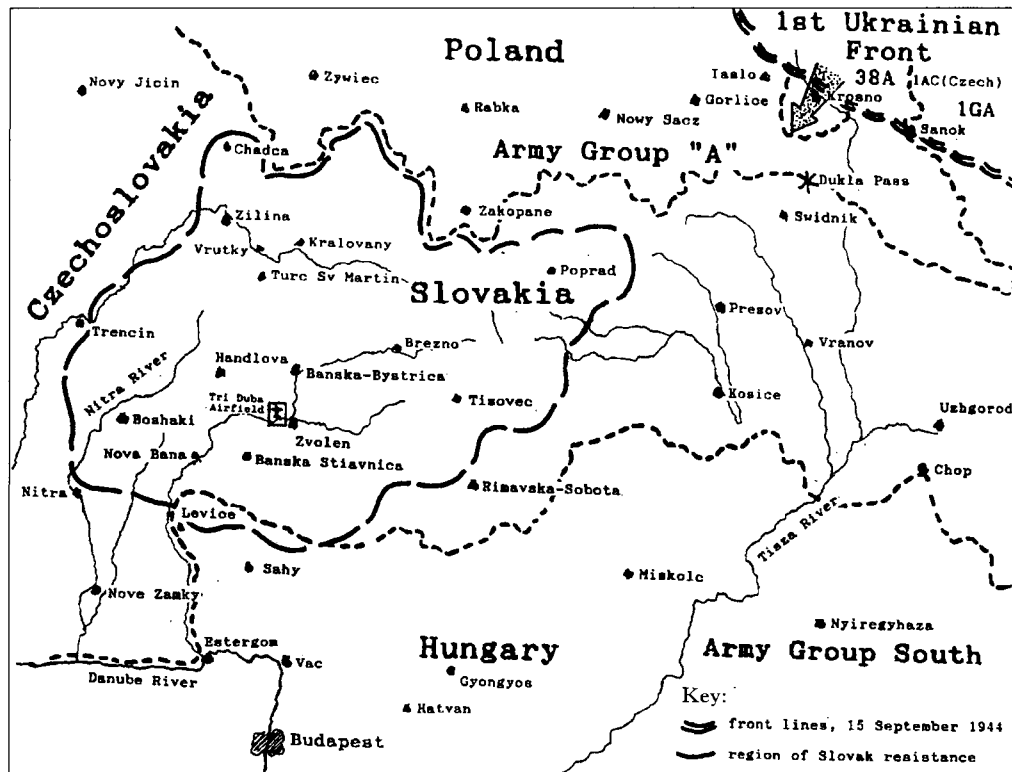
Belorussian partisans seized, stole, or otherwise collected about 500 German staff documents, situation reports, and maps and sent these documents to various Red Army intelligence directorates and departments.⁷⁴ By processing the information contained in these documents, the Intelligence Directorate of the Red Army General Staff determined the designation of 290 German units belonging to German Army Group Centre.⁷⁵

Prior to the Soviet 21 June 1944 offensive, partisan intelligence organs operating in German Army Group Centre's rear area claimed that they provided detailed information on 27 large German formations. This information included the location of Army Group Centre's headquarters, the Third Panzer Army headquarters, the dispositions of the 2nd, 4th and 9th Infantry Divisions, and the location of 132 specific German regiments and battalions.⁷⁶ Of course, the information Soviet intelligence received on these units from the partisans was not their only source of intelligence. But, in addition to containing some new information, the partisan data permitted extensive crosschecking of existing data. Thus, Soviet intelligence organs gave the partisan intelligence effort high marks indeed.⁷⁷

COOPERATION WITH RED ARMY INTELLIGENCE

By the summer of 1944, the co-operation between partisan and Red Army intelligence agencies was extensive and more effective than ever before. Partisan organs were also far more responsive to specific requests for information. Thus, documents indicate that the partisans were able to respond to a request by the 1st Baltic Front headquarters to help them determine the disposition of German reserves in the *front's* main attack sector.⁷⁸ In the 2nd Belorussian Front sector, the partisans verified information collected earlier by reconnaissance photography concerning concentrations of German tank and infantry units in the area south-east of Mogilev.⁷⁹ In a report dated 18 July 1944, General I. Kh. Bagramian, the 1st Baltic Front commander, credited the partisans with providing valuable intelligence assistance to his front staff.⁸⁰ Likewise, in his memoirs, General K. K. Rokossovsky, the 1st Belorussian Front commander, wrote:

The Belorussian Partisan Headquarters co-ordinated their operations with us and liaison was established between partisan detachments and our units. We gave the partisans special tasks



Map 18: Region of the Slovak revolt and Slovak/Soviet partisan operations, September 1944

concerning where and when to strike at nazi communications and bases. They blew up trains on the Bobruisk–Osipovich–Minsk, Baranovich–Luninets and other railways. All their strikes were carried out in close co-ordination with us and were subordinated to the purposes of the forthcoming operation.⁸¹

The 1st Belorussian Front's Military Council, which was in the very midst of the attacking Soviet units, reported that, before the offensive, partisan intelligence 'provided valuable information on enemy defensive objectives, intermediate lines, and separate enemy strong points located in our forces attack sector'.⁸² Thus, virtually all major Soviet headquarters gave due credit to the partisans for their strenuous intelligence efforts.

PARTISAN CONTRIBUTIONS TO DECEPTION

Partisan intelligence organs also assisted the Red Army in more novel ways, such as making major contributions to Soviet strategic deception plans by misleading the Germans about Soviet offensive intentions. When it formulated its strategic plans for the summer of 1944, the Stavka well understood that the Germans had concentrated large forces in Belorussia. These included Field-Marshal Ernst von Busch's Army Group Centre (consisting of one panzer and three field armies), several right-flank divisions of Army Group North's Sixteenth Army, and several panzer divisions transferred from Army Group North Ukraine. Altogether, along the front extending from Sirotino to Kovel' (the initial position of the Soviet forces before the attack), the Germans had concentrated 63 divisions and 3 brigades, with a combined strength of 1.2 million men, 9,635 guns and mortars, 932 tanks, and 1,342 aircraft.⁸³ Furthermore, these German forces occupied well-prepared defensive positions.

As previous Soviet failures in these sectors had indicated, this was a formidable military force, which Soviet military planners hoped to decrease in strength before their June offensive. To achieve this reduction, the *Stavka* and Soviet *fronts* implemented a series of elaborate deception operations aimed at convincing the Germans that they were going to launch their main attack in another front sector, namely against southern Poland. If this Soviet deception operation were successful, the Germans would transfer forces from Belorussia to southern Poland. Soviet partisans played an essential role in this deception by spreading false rumours about the impending false Soviet offensive. The deception

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worked. As a result, the Germans retained 24 of the 34 panzer divisions they had on the Eastern front in the region south of the Pripiat' River at a time when the Soviets intended to launch their real main attack north of the river.⁸⁴

PARTISAN DISRUPTION OF THE GERMAN DEPORTATION PROGRAMME

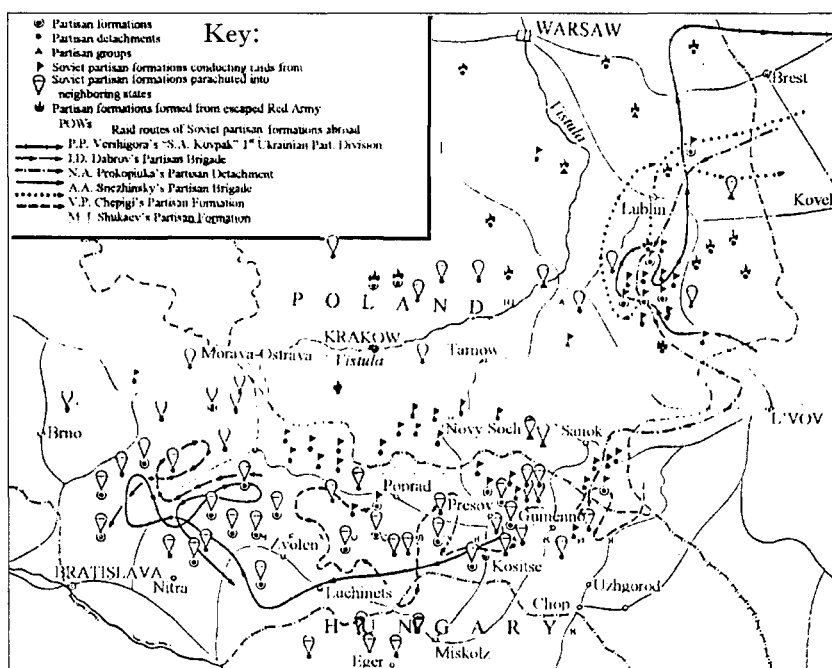
Partisan intelligence also made significant contributions in a realm far removed from actual military operations, specifically, by monitoring and attempting to disrupt German deportation of civilians to Germany. As indicated above, the Germans forcibly deported many people from Nazi-occupied Europe to Germany. In German-occupied Soviet territories, these deportations were of a mass nature, in Belorussia ultimately amounting to 30 per cent of the republic's pre-war population. In accordance with the Germans' so-called '*Ostarbeiter*' [Eastern Worker] programme, between 1942 and 1945, Soviet data indicates that the Germans removed about 4.2 million civilians from the occupied territories of the Soviet Union to serve as virtual slave labourers in German agriculture, industry, and mining.⁸⁵ As Dmytryshyn has correctly pointed out, except for a few volunteers who participated in the initial stage of the programme, all of those transported to the Third Reich went there against their will.⁸⁶

Given that one of the most important missions the Stavka assigned to the partisans was the prevention of these mass deportations by all possible means, partisan intelligence played a conspicuous role in this effort. Specifically, partisan intelligence fulfilled the following two specific missions:

- (a) Providing a maximum amount of information concerning the deportation sites, the transport means used by the Nazis to move deportees to assembly areas, the number of people subjected to deportation, motor and rail transport movement routes, and information on German security units;
- (b) Conducting combat activities to rescue deportees and resettle them in safe areas, often in special so-called family camps organised in partisan regions.⁸⁷

In many cases, the partisans employed both methods to assist the local populace. For example, on 6 December 1943, intelligence agents assigned to partisan units operating in the Borisov region captured the

THE SOVIET PARTISAN MOVEMENT, 1941–1944



Map 19: Regions of partisan actions on the territory of neighbouring states, 1944–45

documents belonging to one of the SS deportation groups. The documents contained plans concerning the deportation of a portion of the population of such Belorussian cities as Orsha, Shklov, and Mogilev. When partisan commands learned of the contents of these documents, they undertook necessary countermeasures to save the people. In another instance, the Belorussian Partisan Headquarters received intelligence reports from several partisan units, including the *'Imeni Kirova'* [In the name of Kirov] Brigade in Poles'e District and the *'Imeni Dovatora'* [In the name of Dovator] Brigade in Vileika District, about planned German punitive expeditions against the local population. Once again, local partisan units undertook protective actions on the basis of that information.⁸⁸

On 7 March 1944, the reconnaissance section of the *'Imeni Dovatora'* Brigade, commanded by V. F. Popok, joined battle with a group of Germans who were attempting to deport the population of the villages of Kuzminichi and Duborovo in Vileika District.⁸⁹ In another case, to prevent mass deportations from Minsk, partisans resettled about 20,000

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Minsk citizens in several nearby villages, many of whom later joined partisan units.⁹⁰ The voluminous *History of Belorussia* included yet another very colourful episode. On the eve of the liberation of Belorussia, partisan intelligence reported on German plans to deport a portion of the population of the town of Ostrovets (in Vileika District) and to shoot the rest of the citizens. The partisans reacted decisively. On 3 July 1944, at a time when the Red Army's offensive was developing at full speed, the partisans seized the town and held it for several days until they were relieved by advancing Red Army forces. The resolute action by the partisans literally saved the town's population.⁹¹ Such resolute partisan operations compelled one former German general to conclude that one factor which caused the collapse of the German front in Russia in 1944 was the German command's inability to cope with the Soviet partisans.⁹²

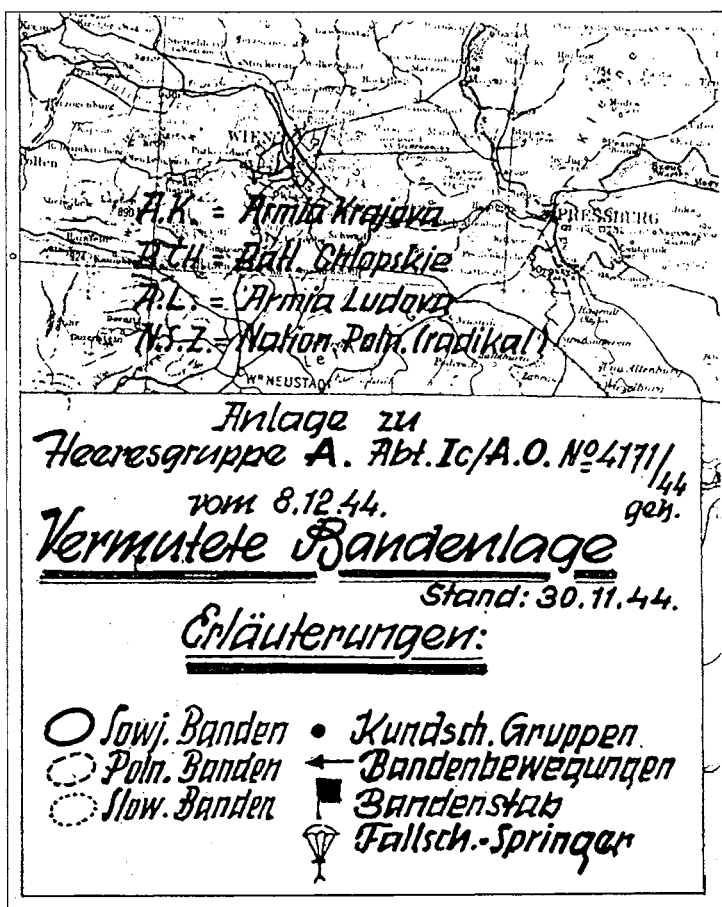
Overall, according to official archival data, the Belorussian partisan fighters alone managed to rescue 15,000 Soviet citizens from German hands and moved another 80,000 inhabitants from German-occupied territories to the Soviet rear area.⁹³

PARTISAN-NKVD CO-OPERATION

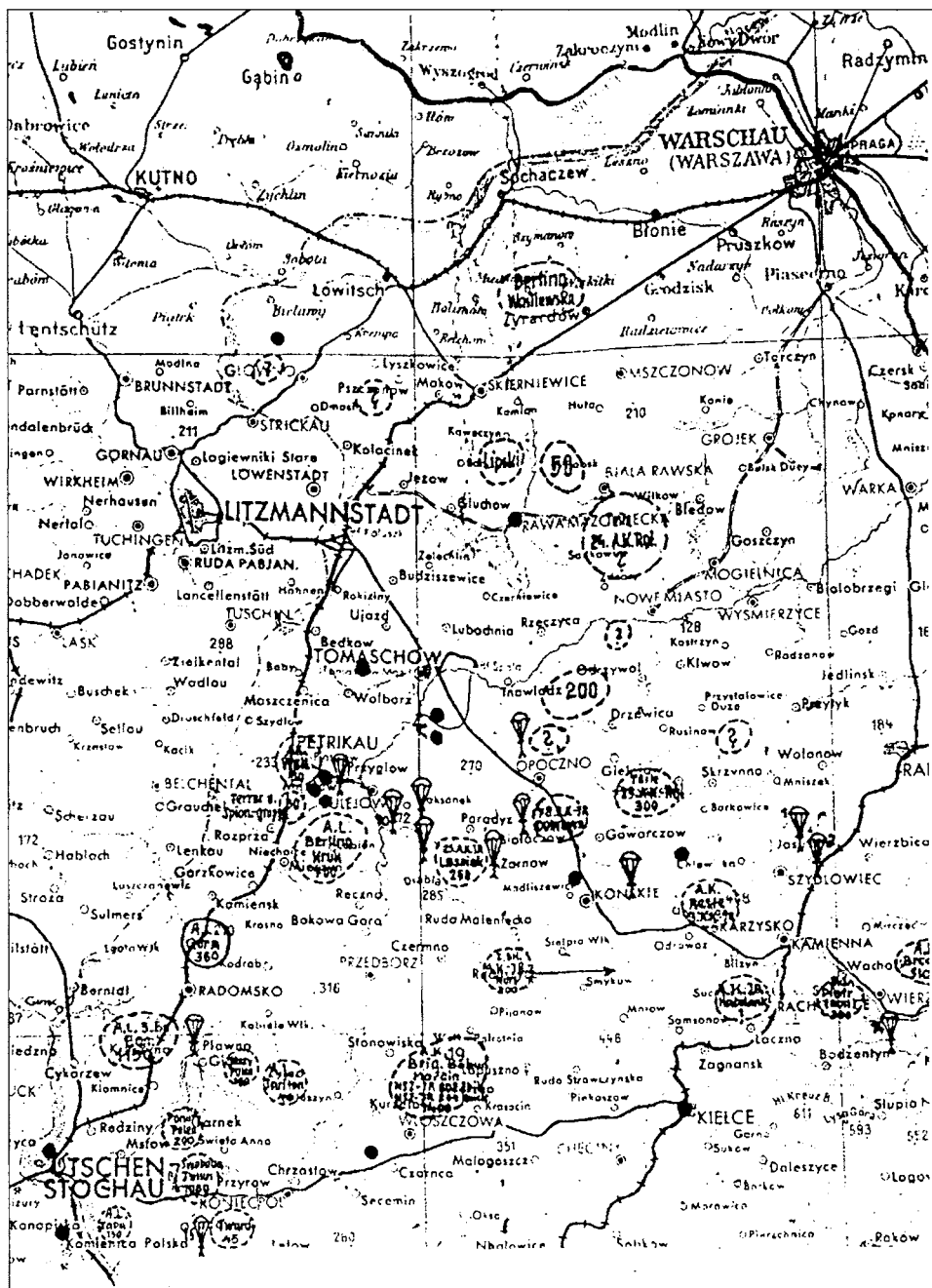
Based upon information that is still fragmentary, it is clear that partisan intelligence organs also worked closely with the Soviet NKVD, the premier state internal-security organ. Although contacts between partisans and special NKVD groups were limited during the first stage of the war (a fact confirmed by many scholars, including Kurt DeWitt), in 1943, and especially in 1944, such co-operation was encouraged.⁹⁴ Now, it is virtually impossible to determine the total number of NKVD groups and secret agents who were dispatched into the enemy rear and how many partisan formations maintained contact with them. It is clear, however, that co-operation in the intelligence realm would certainly have been of benefit to both parties. It is true, that the NKVD feared penetration via partisan ranks of German agents into the highly secretive NKVD structure or the passage of key information about NKVD activities to German intelligence. These cases did occur, but most of them were in 1941 and 1942, when partisan formations were completely outside the realm of NKVD control. In 1943 and 1944, such risks were far lower, although not completely eliminated. Thus, when summing up the

impact of partisan activities in the second half of 1942 and initial months of 1943, the German Provost Marshal General reported, with good reason, 'Parachutist groups no longer acted exclusively on their own, but for the most part joined existing bands and carried out the missions given them (intelligence missions, sabotage against particularly important military objects, etc.) with the help of the bands.'⁹⁵

Despite the shadowy nature of the relationship, the history of the Soviet Partisan Movement is replete with numerous examples of close co-operation between secret NKVD groups and partisan formations. After the war, N. Mikhailashev, a participant of such a group, shared his



Key to Map 20: (opposite)



Map 20: German assessment of partisan activity in Poland, November 1944

experience. Aircraft delivered his group to a partisan airfield in the Vileika District. Upon his arrival, a representative of the underground Party district committee immediately placed several partisan scouts at his group's disposal. The partisan guides then directed the group to its designated operational area. As N. Mikhailashev later stated, without the assistance of the partisan reconnaissance element, which continued to operate near the group's base, it would be difficult if not impossible to fulfil its assigned tasks.⁹⁶ In another instance, professional agents from the special NKVD group code-named '*Plamia*' [Flame] assisted the leadership of the '*Za Sovetskuiu Belarussiu*' [For Soviet Belorussia] Partisan Detachment to reorganise the intelligence activities of the detachment's own reconnaissance sub-unit. At the same time, dozens of partisan scouts collected intelligence information for this NKVD group.⁹⁷

Excellent co-operation existed in the Brest District between partisans and NKVD intelligence-gathering groups and separate NKVD agents. M. Khochlov, the leader of an NKVD group, provided the local partisan formations with valuable information concerning the construction of German defensive positions, defence systems in that sector, and enemy troop movements.⁹⁸ Another special NKVD group, headed by A. Babushkin, maintained close contact with the '*Imeni V. I. Lenina*' [In the name of V. I. Lenin] Partisan Brigade in Vitebsk District. With active partisan assistance, Babushkin's group discovered the location of three Nazi schools for intelligence agent, four punitive groups, and 12 German Abwehr agents who had been parachuted into the Soviet rear area.⁹⁹ At the beginning of 1943, partisans in Leningrad District informed Soviet counter-intelligence organs, namely the NKVD-controlled *SMERSH* [Death to Spies], organisation that the Germans had parachuted agents disguised as Soviet partisans into the area of Lake Dreidskoe.¹⁰⁰ In January 1944 partisans reported to *SMERSH* about the movement to Pskov from Riga of a German Gestapo training school numbering 300 men. That spy school was training secret agents for dispatch into regions recently liberated by the Red Army.¹⁰¹

One keen Western observer, who has extensively analysed the problem of co-operation between Soviet partisans and the Soviet NKVD, has correctly noted:

One is almost forced to conclude that the increasing utilization of the partisans for Soviet intelligence purposes was not an isolated phenomenon but was rather the direct result of, and one of the

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motives behind, the reorganization which was designed to bring about greater effectiveness of the partisans and a closer integration of the movement into the Soviet war effort. When the Soviets ordered a further intensification of partisan warfare during the winter of 1942/43, one of their principal objectives apparently was an increased flow of intelligence for the Red Army and NKVD.¹⁰²

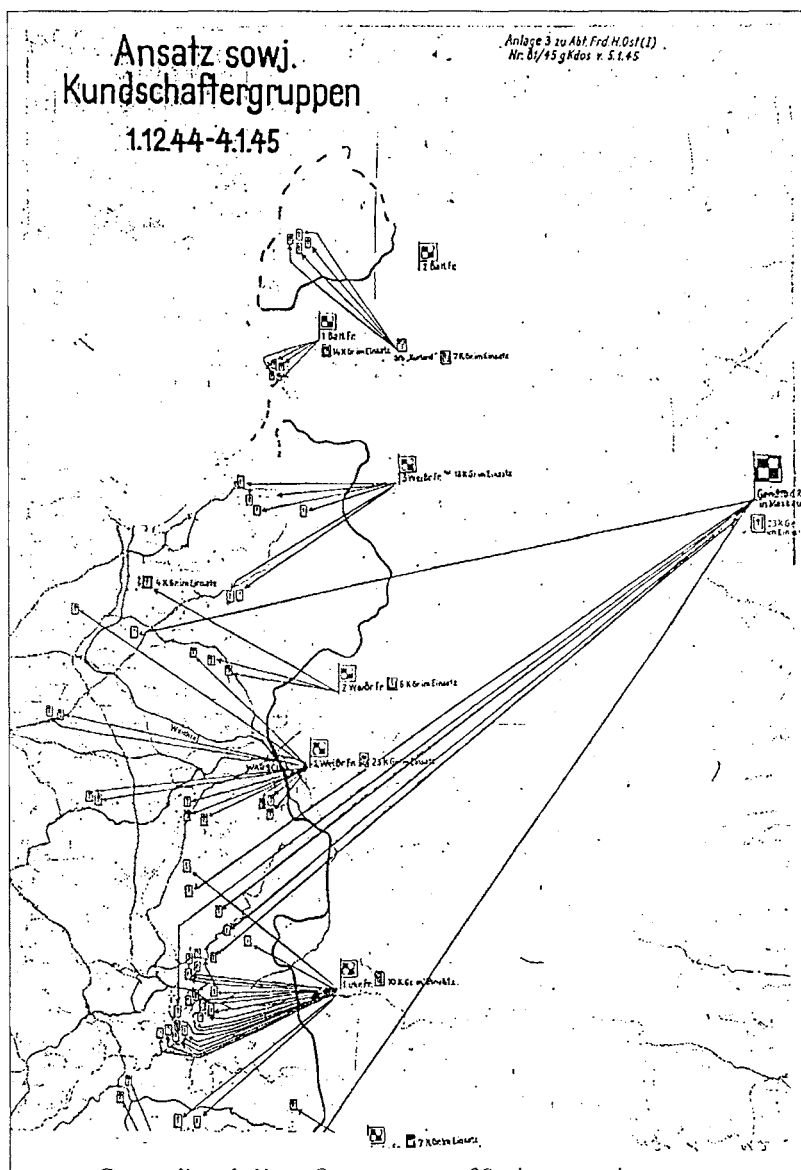
LESSER PARTISAN INTELLIGENCE MISSIONS

Partisan intelligence performed a wide range of less dramatic but nevertheless important functions. Included among these far more mundane tasks was the mission of reporting on terrain and weather conditions in the occupied Soviet territories. For example, beginning in the second half of 1943, several partisan formations in the Leningrad District were assigned experienced hydro-meteorologists, who had received special training in the Soviet rear. Each day they were to make hydro-meteorological measurements and send the information by radio via the partisan headquarters to the appropriate meteorological agency in the Leningrad Front. The Front then transmitted these reports to the Stavka in Moscow. This and other detailed information on weather conditions provided by partisan meteorologists in different parts of German-occupied areas was of vital importance to aviation operations by army Aviation, long-range bomber aviation, and Baltic Fleet aviation.¹⁰³ Soviet authorities officially recognised the important role this kind of information played during their offensive operations in the Leningrad and Novgorod regions January 1944.¹⁰⁴ The Stavka even decorated some partisan hydro-meteorologists with appropriate orders and medals.¹⁰⁵

UNDERGROUND INTELLIGENCE

The Communist Party and its underground organisations in the occupied regions also played an important role in the organisation and conduct of partisan intelligence activities. Today, the Party is no longer as popular as it was among the population of the Republics of the former Soviet Union. Nor is speaking of its wartime exploits in vogue. For example, in December 1993, during the last elections to the Russian Federation's Duma, the Communists won only the third place among

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Map 21: Assessment by German *Fremde Heere Ost* of Soviet reconnaissance, diversionary and partisan activity in Poland, January 1945

the main contending parties. Nevertheless, during the war, it did play an immensely important role in controlling the process of intelligence gathering in the enemy rear area. From the time Stalin promulgated his order 'Concerning the Improvement of Intelligence Work in Partisan Detachments', Party organisations focused on the problem of improving the quality of partisan intelligence. All Party organisations from the Republican central committees down to underground Party cells and Party organisations in individual partisan formations became actively involved. For example, at its 5th plenary session, which took place in Moscow on 26–28 February 1943, the Central Committee of the Belorussian Communist Party discussed this problem. The plenum's decision was categorical: Communist organisations of every level must radically change the state of affairs in this field and provide appropriate military headquarters with precise and timely information.¹⁰⁶

Following these instructions, from November 1943 to January 1944, the Minsk underground Party organisation succeeded in activating about 79 reconnaissance-sabotage groups, which numbered a total of about 300 fighters.¹⁰⁷ They also paid considerable attention to the requirement to appoint Party members as the heads of partisan intelligence organs. Ultimately, Party members made up 62 per cent of the leaders of intelligence organs at the brigade and detachment level.¹⁰⁸ Just before the 1944 summer offensive commenced, the Central Committee sent a radio message to all underground Party organisations in Belorussia that possessed radios, appealing to all partisans and citizens to assist the advancing Red Army in any way possible, but particularly by providing timely intelligence information on the enemy.¹⁰⁹ By the time Operation 'Bagration' began, the Central Committee of the Belorussian Communist Party had already received about 260 radio reports containing such information.¹¹⁰ Beyond any doubt, this information represented a significant contribution to the success of ongoing Red Army operations.

When Operation 'Bagration' was in its last stages and much of the German-occupied territory had been liberated, the official Party newspaper, *Pravda*, openly gave tribute to the partisans' contribution in the operation, stating that these efforts were 'beneficial for the successful offensive'.¹¹¹ The modest nature of this praise was deliberate. With the liberation of occupied Soviet territories finally complete, the Communist leadership took special care not to give the impression that the partisans played the principal role in banishing the invaders from Soviet soil. In fact, during this period, some partisan fighters said as much, and this did not sit well with the Party leadership.

TO WAR'S END

Soviet partisan intelligence activities continued even after the Red Army crossed the Soviet State frontiers into Poland, East Prussia, and other Eastern European lands. For example, within the period from May 1944 to January 1945, the Headquarters of the Ukrainian Partisan Movement and the 1st Ukrainian Front's Military Council maintained radio communications with 37 Soviet partisan formations and units operating in several East European countries.¹¹² Intelligence and reconnaissance elements of these partisan forces supplied information on the structure of German First Panzer Army, the location of its headquarters; the structure of First Hungarian Army; the defensive positions of several of that army's divisions, and the precise location of several enemy airfields.¹¹³ At times, partisan intelligence proved particularly interesting for the Soviet command. Such was the case on 7 December 1944, when a partisan detachment commanded by Maximov discovered German V-1 and V-2 rocket testing sites 30 kilometres north-west of the Czechoslovakian city of Trnava.¹¹⁴

CONCLUSIONS

Thus, it is evident that the intelligence missions performed by Soviet partisan formations and units were extremely diverse. They ranged from simple reconnaissance by a wide variety of surveillance means to complicated assignments given to them in the interests of the State NKVD. Numerous documents, including official archival materials, indicate that the priorities of partisan intelligence missions were devoted to support of the partisan forces themselves and the Red Army. Moreover, their support of Red Army operations expanded in 1943 and 1944 in direct proportion to the Red Army's offensive success.

Soviet partisans began supplying the Red Army with serious intelligence and data information soon after the German invasion of the Soviet Union. Initially, the partisans faced many disadvantages, the most significant of which was their lack of training for the task of intelligence collection and processing. After the Soviet victory at Stalingrad, however, official State and Party involvement brought about drastic changes and innovations, which overcame these shortcomings. The most important of these measures was the secondment of trained army intelligence officers to partisan staffs and the supply of radios to the more important

partisan units. Thereafter, the range, scope, and importance of partisan intelligence collection increased geometrically until the partisans were in a position to contribute materially to the massive Soviet offensive victories in summer 1944.

NOTES

1. Drum, *Air Power*, p. x (Preface).
2. Armstrong, *Soviet Partisans*, p. 540; Clark, *Barbarossa*, p. 134; Dixon and Heilbrunn, *Communist Guerrilla Warfare*, p. 128.
3. Armstrong, *Soviet Partisans*, p. 352.
4. Macksey, *Partisans of Europe*, p. 124; Laqueur, *Guerrilla*, p. 214.
5. Laqueur, *Guerrilla*, p. 214.
6. A. Kniazkov, 'Partisanskaia razvedka v period razgroma nemetsko-fashist-skikh voisk pod Kurskom i na Dnepre' [Partisan intelligence in the period of the defeat of German-Fascist forces at Kursk and to the Dnepr], in *Leninskii komsomol' v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine* [The Lenin Komsomol' in the Great Patriotic War] (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1975), p. 301.
7. As quoted in Armstrong, *Soviet Partisans*, p. 346.
8. *Voina v tylu vruga*, 1-i, pp. 114, 115.
9. V. Andrianov, 'Razvedyvatel'naia deiatel'nost' partizan' [Intelligence activities of the partisans], *VIZh*, No. 8 (August 1971), pp. 24-5.
10. As quoted in Armstrong, *Soviet Partisans*, p. 359.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 341-2.
12. Rokossovsky, *A Soldier's Duty*, p. 208.
13. *Krasnaia zvezda* [Red star], 11 October 1944.
14. *IVMV*, tom 7, pp. 312, 313; Andrianov, 'Razvedyvatel'naia', p. 24.
15. Kniazkov, 'Partisanskaia razvedka', pp. 304-5.
16. Andrianov, 'Razvedyvatel'naia', p. 20.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 27; Kniazkov, 'Partisanskaia razvedka', p. 302.
19. E. Dohnanyi, 'Combating Soviet Guerrillas', in Osanka, *Modern Guerrilla Warfare*, pp. 107-8.
20. Andrianov, 'Razvedyvatel'naia', p. 22.
21. As quoted in Armstrong, *Soviet Partisans*, pp. 346-7.
22. V. Kiselev, 'O sryve gitlerovskikh planov khimicheskoi voiny' [Concerning the disruption of the Hitlerite plans for chemical war], *VI*, No. 5 (May 1978), pp. 27-8.
23. V. Kiselev 'Vklad Belorusskikh partizan v sryv podgotovki germaniei khimicheskoi voiny' [The contributions of the Belorussian partisans in the disruption of German preparations for chemical war], in *Voprosy istorii KPSS* [Questions of history of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union], *Mezhved. sbornik*, vyp. 7 (Minsk, 1976), pp. 72-73.
24. *NA*, f. 3500, op. 3, d. 117, 1. 62.

25. N. Pachomov et al., *Vitebskoe podpolie* [The Vitebsk underground] (Minsk: Belarus, 1969), p. 223.
26. Zhilianin et al., *Bez linii fronta*, p. 122.
27. *NA*, f. 3500, op. 3, d. 124, 11. 63. 65.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid., f. 3500, op. 2, d. 55, 1. 71; d. 30, 11. 130, 585.
30. P. Machul'sky, *Vechnyi ogon'* [Endless fire] (Minsk: Belarus, 1969), pp. 376–7.
31. *Mirovaia voina 1939–1945: Sbornik statei* [The World War: A collection of articles] (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1957), p. 236.
32. B. Dolgotovich, 'Vedenie razvedki partizanami pri osvobozhdenii Belorussii' [The conduct of intelligence by partisans in the liberation of Belorussia], *VIZh*, No. 3 (March 1976), p. 90.
33. Ibid., p. 89.
34. Andrianov, 'Razvedyvatel'naia', p. 23.
35. Ibid.
36. *NA*, f. 4290, op. 2, d. 22, 11. 30–31.
37. Armstrong, *Soviet Partisans*, p. 356.
38. Ibid., pp. 355–6.
39. Dolgotovich, 'Vedenie razvedki partizanami', p. 92.
40. *NA*, f. 4, op. 33a, d. 466, 11. 98–111; fond 3601, op. 1, d. 32, 11. 1–86.
41. Kniazkov, 'Partisanskaia razvedka', p. 305.
42. *NA*, f. 3500, op. 2, d. 62, 11. 348–350, 561–562; f. 4, op. 3a, d. 601, 1. 93.
43. N. Muller, *Wehrmacht i okkupatsiia* [The Wehrmacht and the occupation] (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1974), p. 291.
44. V. Kiselev, 'Partizanskaia razvedka', pp. 24–5.
45. *Sovetskaia Belorussia*, 11 December 1970; Klimov and Grakov, *Parhizany vileishchiny*, p. 298.
46. Muller, *Wehrmacht i okkupatsiia*, p. 291.
47. E. Ioffe, 'Pod imenem ekateriny semenovoi' [Under the name Katherine Semenova], *Vechernii Minsk* [Evening Minsk], 5 January 1994.
48. *NA*, f. 63, op. 16, d. 2, 1. 40; f. 3500, op. 1, d. 2, 11. 309–310.
49. Ibid., f. 3500, op. 4, d. 284, 1. 78; op. 2, d. 55, 11. 49–51, 74, 84.
50. Kniazkov, 'Partizanskaia razvedka', pp. 308–9.
51. Ibid., p. 308 (note).
52. V. Kiselev, 'Vrag ikh boiatsia' [There enemies struggled], in *Voennye kontrrazvedchiki: Osobym otdelam VChK – 60 let* [Military counterintelligence: The special department of the Cheka – 60 years] (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1978), pp. 321–2.
53. Shirer, *Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, p. 892.
54. Macksey, *Partisans of Europe*, p. 124.
55. *Velikaia Otechestvennaia voina Sovetskogo soiuz 1941–1945: Kratkaia istoriia* [The Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union 1941–1945: A short history] 2-e izdanie (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1970), p. 230.
56. Ibid.

57. Rokossovsky, *A Soldier's Duty*, p. 178.
58. *BSE*, tom 13 (Moscow, 1973), p. 562.
59. Kniazkov, 'Partisanskaia razvedko', p. 306.
60. Dmytryshyn, *USSR: A Concise History*, p. 227.
61. Kniazkov, 'Partisanskaia razvedko', p. 301.
62. Andrianov, 'Razvedyvatel'naia', p. 24.
63. Ibid.
64. *NA*, f. 3500, op. 2, d. 55, 11. 130, 132; op. 3, d. 133, 1. 18; f. 4855, op. 1, d. 3, 11. 39. 75.
65. Ibid., f. 3500, op. 4, d. 137, 1. 268.
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67. *NA*, f. 3613, op. 1, d. 5, 1. 7.
68. *Ludi legend* [People of legends], 5-i vypusk (Moscow: Politizdat, 1974), p. 462.
69. S. Shtemenko, *General'nyi shtab v gody voiny* [The General Staff in the War Years] (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1968), p. 255.
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71. *Velikaia Otechestvennaia voina 1941–1945: Slovar'-spravochnik* [The Great Patriotic War 1941–1945: A dictionary-handbook], pp. 270–1.
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73. *Gistoriia Belarusskai SSR* [A history of Belorussia], tom 4 (Minsk: Nauka i tehnika, 1975), p. 431.
74. Dolgotovich, 'Vedenie razvedki partizanami', p. 91.
75. Ibid.
76. A. Kniazkov, 'Vzaimodeistvie sovetskikh partizan s deistvuiushchei armiei' [The co-operation of Soviet partisans with operating armies], in *Partia vo glave narodnoi bor'by v tylu vraga. 1941–1944* [The Party at the head of the people in the struggle in the enemy rear 1941–1945] (Moscow: Politizdat, 1976), p. 253.
77. D. Naumov, *Lesnaia voina* [The forest war] (Alma-Ata, 1972), p. 151.
78. *IVMV*, tom 9, p. 228.
79. Ibid.
80. Ibid.
81. Rokossovsky, *A Soldier's Duty*, pp. 238–9.
82. *Gistoriia Belarusskai SSR*, tom 4, p. 432.
83. *IVMV*, tom 9, p. 41.
84. Ibid.
85. *Velikaia Otechestvennaia voina 1941–1945. Slovar'-spravochnik*, pp. 315–16.
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87. A. Bruchanov, 'Geroicheskaia bor'ba sovetskikh partizan v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny' [The historic struggle of Soviet partisans in the Great Patriotic War], *VIZh*, No. 3 (March 1965), p. 37.

88. *NA*, f. 6491, op. 1, d. 1, l. 1; f. 3609, op. 1, d. 7, 11. 17, 31. 57; f. 3779, op. 1, d. 28, l. 43.
89. Klimov and Grakov, *Partizany vileishchiny*, p. 140.
90. Bruchanov, 'Geroicheskaia bor'ba sovetskikh partizan', p. 37.
91. *Gistoriia Belarusskai SSR*, tom 4, p. 442.
92. Osanka, *Modern Guerrilla Warfare*, p. 443.
93. *NA*, f. 3500, op. 3, d. 77, 11. 94, 145; d. 127, l. 189.
94. Armstrong, *Soviet Partisans*, pp. 338–9.
95. *Ibid.*, p. 339.
96. N. Mikhailashev, *Buria gneva* [Storm of rage] (Minsk: Belarus, 1971), pp. 215, 219–21.
97. *Niemen*, No. 2 (February 1969), p. 147.
98. P. Koval'sky, *V brestskikh lesakh* [In the Brest forests] (Minsk: Belarus, 1970), p. 64.
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101. *Ibid.*
102. K. DeWitt, 'The Partisans in Soviet Intelligence', in Armstrong, *Soviet Partisans*, p. 341.
103. Andrianov, 'Razvedyvatel'naia', p. 26.
104. *Ibid.*
105. *Ibid.*
106. *Vsenarodnoe partizanskoe dvizhenie v Belorussii*, tom 2, kniga.1 (Minsk: Belarus, 1973), pp. 184–7, 189.
107. *Geroi podpoliia*, vypusk 1 (Moscow: Politizdat, 1970), p. 69.
108. V. Kiselev, 'Ludi bessmertnogo muzhestva' [Persons of eternal courage], *Kommunist Belarussii* [Belorussian Communist], No. 7 (July 1974), p. 40.
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111. *Pravda*, 16 August 1944.
112. Andrianov, 'Razvedyvatel'naia', pp. 27–8.
113. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
114. *Ibid.*

7

Conclusion

A recognised authority on the problem of partisan (guerrilla) warfare, Otto Heilbrunn, has articulated an interesting dictum concerning partisan fighting. He stated that one could classify partisan movements according to motivation, structure, or function. Accordingly, some movements fight wars independently, as they did in Malaya, Indo-China, and Kenya, while others operate as auxiliaries to an army.¹ The latter was the case in the Soviet Union, since the partisan movement clearly operated in tandem with and was usually subordinate to the Red Army. Therefore, any evaluation of the movement's effectiveness must be assessed within the context of how well it supported the Red Army on its march to victory.

Detailed assessment of the Soviet Partisan Movement's activities within this essential context clearly leads to the conclusion that it was indeed a strategic factor in the defeat of German forces on Soviet-German front. Even during the summer and autumn of 1942, when partisan warfare had not yet reached its fullest intensity, the German Army devoted about 10 per cent of its overall strength to the struggle against the Soviet partisans. This amounted to 15 regular and security divisions, 27 security and police regiments, and 144 security and police battalions.² To understand better the relative importance of this figure, the total strength of the German and Italian forces fighting at this time in North Africa was only 12 divisions.³ Furthermore, during the later stages of the war, the number of German formations fighting and defending against partisans markedly increased. According to the German Army General Staff figures, on 1 October 1943, 14 German divisions and 14 divisions of Germany's allies were engaged in the partisan struggle, along with numerous security and police units, which were equivalent to several more divisions.⁴ This represented a sizeable force

that could have been otherwise employed against the regular Red Army.

The partisans made real contributions to the war effort by significantly frustrating German plans to exploit the occupied Soviet territories economically. In the final analysis, in these territories the Germans were able to obtain only one-seventh of what they looted from other European countries, for example France. In occupied Soviet territories, they expropriated an estimated only \$1 billion's worth of food and other products, while they managed to exact an estimated \$26 billion's worth of goods and services from other European countries. According to official Russian estimates, the enemy failed to ship out 120 million tons of pillaged goods from the Soviet Union because of partisan activities.⁵

The partisans also afforded considerable assistance to Red Army forces operating at the front by conducting increasingly systematic and damaging strikes against the enemy's rear area communications network. These burgeoning partisan activities, coupled with the Red Army's increasing offensive success and thoughtless German occupation policies, inspired the indigenous people in occupied territory to join or support the struggle against the Nazis. Subsequently, partisan fighting infected many regions but was particularly prevalent in German occupied Belorussia, the Leningrad, Kalinin, Smolensk and Orel Districts of the Russian Republic, and in the Ukraine. This partisan warfare on so vast a scale was unprecedented in Russian history. In the end it was a genuine people's war. In general, the populace supported the partisan fighters by providing them not only moral support, and care and attention, but also food and masses of intelligence information.

The partisan struggle realised its full potential only after the government and Party imposed centralised direction over it and co-ordination within it. Establishment within Stavka of the Central Headquarters of the Partisan Movement on 30 May 1942 provided the necessary leadership for partisan activity to become a real movement and fostered the co-ordination of partisan military operations with those of the Red Army. The Partisan Central Headquarters was instrumental in the establishment of an effective regional republican and district organisation for the partisan movement without which co-ordination could not have been effected. In reality, the Communist Party Central Committee, the respective republican and regional Party committees, and numerous underground Party organisations, which were established in towns and district centres, at railway stations, and in many other important places on the direct instruction of Moscow, controlled most of the important

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partisan fighting. While paying tribute to the partisan fighters against Nazism during the Second World War, it is important to recognise that Communist organisations operating in the German rear did not confine their activities only to the formation and control of partisan units. They also conducted an extensive propaganda effort among the local population by publishing newspapers and leaflets, tirelessly exposing the crimes of Nazi occupation authorities, and disseminating accurate news of the war. Thus, they did many of those seemingly mundane things that strengthened the faith of the indigenous population in ultimate Russian victory.

Extensive partisan territories, specifically regions and zones, existed in German-occupied Belorussia, Ukraine, the Leningrad District, and in the forests of the Briansk region. At the height of Red Army offensives, most notably in the summers of 1943 and 1944, partisan brigades and detachments launched diversionary and demolition operations of unprecedented scale against wide areas of the enemy's communications network. They destroyed or damaged countless headquarters facilities, supply depots, and small enemy units, they significantly disrupted German railway and road traffic, and they seized tactical terrain objectives (like river crossings), all the while inflicting significant personnel casualties.

Less tangible but even more important from the standpoint of morale, throughout the entire war, Soviet partisans succeeded in creating and maintaining an acute feeling of insecurity among German forces and occupation authorities in German occupied territory. In his memoirs, Fernand de Brinon, the French quisling who visited Russia in 1943, described the dread of partisans he observed among German soldiers who escorted him on his tour.⁶

The unprecedented size and sophistication of the Soviet Partisan Movement and the scale of partisan warfare that accompanied it may have been a by-product of the very system that prevailed in the Soviet Union. The persistence and might of Soviet partisan fighting reflected something extraordinary yet intangible in the Soviet system itself. Hosking once perceptively observed, 'All in all, the Soviet peoples displayed between 1941 and 1945 endurance, resourcefulness and determination which may be well beyond the capacities of economically more advanced nations. They won the war partly because of, partly in spite of, their leaders . . . The war showed the Soviet system at its best and at its worst'.⁷ It may well be that only such an extraordinary system could mobilise so many people into partisan formations,

gradually arm them, and then focus their missions to accord fully with those of the Armed Forces as a whole, that is, to annihilate so powerful an enemy.

Bridging the period from the Second World War to the present, it is clear that partisan (guerrilla) warfare is still a most active form of struggle. The world is replete with examples that clearly indicate that the nuclear era and the massive ongoing revolution in military technology have not challenged the penchant for or utility of partisan fighting. On the contrary, it is likely that this sort of warfare will even grow in importance, under either traditional or new guises.

In the new millennium, partisan warfare will remain a vital element in numerous armed conflicts. In fact, the sophistication and proliferation of nuclear weapons globally may accord new dimensions to partisan war; guerrilla fighters may try to achieve their ambitious goals by employing weapons of mass destruction, including tactical nuclear weapons. Technology has already assisted the would-be nuclear partisan. As early as the 1950s, nuclear mines and light nuclear artillery systems of the 'Davy Crockett' type were in US Army service and could be employed at the mechanised infantry battalion level, a level equivalent to a partisan detachment. Thus, mankind is not far from having to address a new and sobering challenge, specifically, terrorist attacks by irresponsible individuals or groups that possess weapons of mass destruction. Sadly, there is no easy and cheap way for democratic societies to provide reliable security against such partisan (guerrilla) or terrorist activities. This current US President, Bill Clinton, made clear in his 14 January 1994 radio address to a Moscow audience.

Therefore, as the long prevalent threat of all-out thermonuclear warfare diminishes, permanent vigilance is still required. The acute danger posed by the potential use of tactical nuclear weapons by partisan (guerrilla) groups requires careful and constant attention on the part of all democratic societies. Limited partisan (guerrilla) warfare in many parts of the globe could serve as a detonator of dreaded new conflicts, specifically, if not a world war, a new genre of partisan war with weapons of mass destruction. While possibilities exist in Africa, Latin America, Asia, and even an ethnically torn Europe, the Middle East is especially vulnerable, given its host of unresolved and highly emotional problems. The corruption rife in many governments, nascent nationalism, and religious and ethnic tensions all provide fertile soil for frustrated partisan (guerrilla) fighters or their terrorist brothers to resort to measures that have hitherto been unthinkable.

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In addition, based on past experiences, in particularly the Soviet experience, partisan (guerrilla) forces can sometimes become an integral part of any country's defence scheme. If so, and if they are armed with nuclear weapons (or other weapons of mass destruction), they can alter existing conventional military power relationships to an unprecedented degree and, with it, established methods for dealing with local or regional conflicts. Several examples will suffice.

A good contemporary case study is the situation in Iraq, which harbours territorial claims against its neighbours. These claims are being resisted by the United Nations and outside powers. In turn, President Saddam Hussein has accused Western powers, especially the United States, of provocations against his regime. Recent serious incidents in the no-fly zones and the weapons of mass destruction inspection controversy indicate that renewed hostilities in the region cannot be completely ruled out. The cat-and-mouse game played by the Iraqi leadership may be, under certain conditions, a risky game. The popularity of Saddam Hussein among large sections of the Arab public and the force of Islamic fundamentalism make the situation in the region more volatile still. As one observer noted, 'It is not the world against Iraq, it is the West against Islam.'⁸

Other regions offer potential for expanded partisan (guerrilla) warfare. For example, some radical-nationalist states in Africa, Somalia for example, have called for and waged large-scale partisan (guerrilla) operations not only against their local opponents but also against United Nations' forces.

Finally, the recent events in the Caucasus region demonstrate the dangers in this region and Central Asia as well. The quarrels between peoples in the Northern Caucasus, which are rooted in nationalism, promise nothing positive for the new Russian leadership in the near future and even indicate potential new dangers of future partisan war. For example, the leaders of the self-proclaimed Republic of Chechnia have threatened to unleash 'nuclear disaster' in the Russian Federation should the latter continue to use force against the fledgling republic. At the same time, Russia's diplomatic efforts to forever extinguish civil and partisan war in its southern territories have produced few substantive results. Instead, local nationalist leaders remind Russia and the world of the stubborn guerrilla struggle led for ten years by Imam Shamil a mere century and a half ago.

It is likely that partisan (guerrilla) struggle will continue to attract the attention of global great powers, the United Nations, and the nations of

the world large. It is their responsibility not only to pay attention to this reality but also understand the new dangers and implications of that type of war. As costly as it may well be, in the long run, it will be far less expensive than to be caught unawares. A good place to begin is to understand the unprecedented Soviet experiences of the Second World War and begin to apply their clear lessons.

NOTES

1. Heilbrunn, *Warfare in the Enemy Rear*, p. 107.
2. *IVMV*, tom 5, p. 293.
3. Ellis, *Short History of Guerrilla Warfare*, p. 148.
4. 'The Soviet Union in the Great Patriotic War (1941–1945)', *Socialism: Theory and Practice*, No. 7 (July 1979), p. 118.
5. Ibid.
6. Werth, *Russia at War*, p. 726.
7. Hosking, *First Socialist Society*, pp. 294–5.
8. Television broadcast in the Russian Federation's 1st channel, 14 January 1994.
9. As quoted in S. Huntington, 'The Clashes of Civilizations?', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 3 (Summer 1993), p. 35.

Appendices

Abstract from V. I. Lenin, *Partisan Warfare*, translated from *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* [Complete collection of works], 3rd edition, Vol. 1.

The question of partisan actions has aroused great interest within the party and among the workers. We have mentioned this topic repeatedly before. Our present intention is to redeem our promise and summarise our position on this subject.

Let us start from the beginning. What are the basic questions every Marxist must ask when he analyses the problem of the types of struggle? First of all, unlike primitive forms of socialism, Marxism does not tie the movement to any particular combat method. It recognises the possibility that struggle may assume the most variegated of forms. For that matter, Marxism does not 'invent' those forms of struggle. It merely organises the tactics of the conflict and renders them suitable for general use. It also makes the revolutionary classes conscious of the combat forms that emerge spontaneously from the activities of the movement. Marxism rejects all abstract thinking and doctrinaire prescriptions about the forms of struggle. It calls for careful study of the mass struggle that is actually taking place. As the movement develops, as the consciousness of the masses grows, and as the economic and political crises are becoming more intense, ever new and different methods of defence and attack will be used in the conflict. Hence, Marxism never will reject any particular combat method, let alone reject it forever. Marxism does not limit itself to those types of struggle that, at a given moment, are both practical and traditional. It holds that, owing to changes in social conditions, new combat forms will inevitably arise, although no one can foresee what the nature of these future encounters will be. In this field, if we may say so, Marxism is learning from the practice of the masses. It is far from claiming that it should teach the masses tactics elaborated in the abstract by

strategists of the pen. We know, as Kautsky stated when he was analysing the different forms of social revolution, that the coming crisis will present us with new and unpredictable forms of action.

Second, Marxism asks that the various types of struggle be analysed within their historical framework. To discuss conflict outside its historical and concrete setting is to misunderstand elementary dialectic materialism. At various junctures of the economic evolution, and depending upon changing political, national, cultural, social and other conditions, differing types of struggle may become important and even predominant. As a result of those (sociological) transformations, secondary and subordinate forms of action may change their significance. To try and answer positively or negatively the question of whether a certain tactic is usable, without at the same time studying the concrete conditions confronting a given movement at a precise point of its development, would mean a complete negation of Marxism.

Those are the two basic concepts which must serve as our guide. The soundness of this approach has been confirmed by numerous examples from the history of Western European Marxism. At present, European socialists regard parliamentary politics and trade unionism as their main method of struggle. Previously, they favoured the armed uprising. Contrary to the opinion of liberal-bourgeois politicians like the Russian Cadets and the *Bessaglavtsi*, the European socialists are perfectly willing to favour the uprising again should the situation change in the future.

During the 1870s, social democrats rejected the idea that the general strike could be used as a panacea tactic and as a non-political method suitable for the immediate overthrow of the bourgeoisie. But after the experience of 1905, the social democrats fully recognised the political mass strike as a means that, under certain conditions, could become necessary. Similarly, during the 1840s the social democrats recognised the utility of barricades. By the end of the nineteenth century, conditions had changed, and the socialists rejected the barricades as unsuitable. However, after the experience of the Moscow rising, which, in Kautsky's words, demonstrated new tactics of barricade fighting, they were willing to revise their position and again acknowledged the usefulness of barricades.

APPENDICES

DIRECTIVE OF THE ALL-UNION COMMUNIST PARTY'S CENTRAL COMMITTEE TO DISTRICT AND REGION PARTY COMMITTEES, 18 JULY 1941

Combat in the German Army's rear area has acquired particular importance in the struggle with Fascist Germany, which has occupied a portion of Soviet territory. The missions [of this struggle] are to create unbearable conditions for the German invaders, to disorganise their lines of communications and the supply of military units, to paralyse all their measures, to destroy the usurpers and their collaborators, to support the organisation of partisan cavalry and infantry units and destruction groups everywhere, and to extend the broad network of our Bolshevik organisations in order to carry out all measures against the Fascist occupiers. There are still a considerable number of methods and capabilities that we have not yet used to inflict severe blows on the enemy in this battle against the Fascist invaders. In all of these actions and in every town as well as in every village, we will receive the willing support of hundreds and even thousands of our brothers and friends, who find themselves under the boots of the German Fascists and who are expecting our help in organising the struggle against the occupiers.

To provide this combat activity in the German Army's rear area greater direction and fighting power, the leaders of Communist Party republic, district [oblast], and regional [raion] organs must themselves immediately take control. They must personally organise work in districts occupied by the Germans and create groups and units of selfless fighters that are already engaged in a battle of annihilation against enemy forces and in their destruction. In a few instances, the leaders of Party and Soviet organisations in regions threatened by the Fascists have shamelessly abandoned their combat posts and retreated deep into the rear area to safe positions, thus becoming deserters and pitiful cowards. Faced with these shameful facts, the heads of republic and district Party organisations are not taking energetic measures. The VKP(b) [All-Union Communist Party (Bolshevik)] Central Committee demands that all Party and Soviet organisations, and especially their leaders, put an end to such unbearable conditions. [It] reminds them that the Party and the government will not hesitate to implement the severest measures regarding these slackers and deserters. It hopes that Party organisations will take every step to purge these traitors from Party organisations, concentrate all their efforts on destroying the enemy at the front and in

the rear area, and make every preparation for victory against the Fascist bands.

Consequently, the VKP(b) Central Committee demands that the Party Central Committees in the republics and in the district and regional committees in the occupied districts and regions and in those threatened with occupation carry out the following measures:

- (1) Select particularly reliable and prominent Party, Soviet, and Komsomol' activists, as well as non-party members devoted to the Soviet regime, who are acquainted with circumstances in the regions to which they are to be assigned, to organise Communist (underground) cells and to lead partisan activities and the destruction campaign. Carefully prepare and assign workers to certain regions covertly. To this end; each group (of two or three men) must maintain contact with only one person, and assigned groups are not to be in contact with one another.

- (2) In those regions threatened by enemy occupation, the leaders of Party organisations must organise secret underground cells without delay, to which they must immediately assign a number of Communists and Komsomol' members.

To ensure that partisan activities expand broadly throughout the enemy's rear areas, Party organisations must immediately create combat and paratrooper units from those who participated in the Civil War and those comrades who have already distinguished themselves in destruction battalions, in Home Guard units, and as NKVD and NKGB workers. Also enlist in these groups (combat and paratrooper units) Communist and Komsomol' members not used for work in secret cells.

To this end, supply partisan units and secret groups with arms, ammunition, money, and valuables. Bury and conceal the necessary supplies ahead of time.

Establish signal communications between partisan units, secret cells, and Soviet regions. To this end, supply these organisations with radio equipment, couriers, codes, etc., and distribute leaflets, slogans, and newspapers on the spot.

- (3) Under the supervision of their first secretaries, Party organisations must select experienced fighters. These must be comrades who are devoted to the Party aims, who are personally well known to the leaders of the Party organisation, and who are experienced in organising and leading partisan activity.

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(4) The Central Committees of republican Communist Parties, district committees, and regional committees must report to the VKP(b) Central Committee, through a specially designated (concealed) address, the names of those comrades who are selected as leaders of partisan groups.

The VKP(b) Central Committee demands that leaders of Party organisations personally direct the struggle in the German Army rear area and that they instil enthusiasm in those persons who are devoted to the Soviet regime by personal examples of bravery and selflessness so that the entire struggle will provide direct, generous, and heroic assistance to the Red Army fighting the Fascists at the front.

DIRECTIVE OF THE NORTH-WESTERN FRONT'S MILITARY COUNCIL TO SUBORDINATE UNITS CONCERNING THE ORGANISATION AND ACTIVITY OF PARTISAN DETACHMENTS AND DIVERSIONARY GROUPS, 20 JULY 1941

General Directives

1. The partisan movement has arisen as a popular movement in the enemy rear. It is called upon to play a mighty role in our patriotic war. Comrade Stalin, the Chairman of the State Defence Committee, has clearly stated the basic objectives of partisan warfare in the enemy rear. [Accordingly], 'Partisan units, mounted and on foot, must be formed, and diversionary groups must be organised to combat enemy forces, foment partisan warfare everywhere, blow up bridges and roads, damage telephone and telegraph lines, and set fire to forests, stores, and transports. Conditions in the occupied regions must be made unbearable for the enemy and all of his accomplices. They must be hounded and annihilated at every step, and all their measures frustrated.'

2. First and foremost, partisan detachments and diversionary groups must be established in the main operating areas, that is, in the areas of greatest enemy concentration. Partisan detachments are to be organised as combat units or diversionary groups according to their mission.

3. Partisan detachments must be well armed and sufficiently strong to conduct active operations in the enemy rear. The total strength of such a unit may amount to 75–150 men, organised into two or three companies, with the companies divided into two or three platoons.

4. The basic operating sections of combat units will be the company and the platoon. Their basic duties, as a rule carried out at night or from ambush, are attacks on columns and concentrations of motorised infantry, on dumps and ammunition transports, on airfields, and on railroad transport.

The operations must be carried out in areas in which forests furnish cover for the units. Such an area may consist of up to two or three administrative regions. Operations are to be carried out only against the enemy's main lines of communication. Each administrative region should contain at least one partisan combat unit.

5. Aside from combat units, diversionary groups of 30–50 men are to be formed in each region. These will be organised into five to eight groups of three, five, or ten men each. The diversionary groups must be so organised that the partisans in one group do not know those in any of the other groups. Organisations above the individual unit level exist only for the purpose of controlling group operations and organising new groups.

6. The main objectives of diversionary groups are as follows: destroying telephone and telegraph lines, burning gasoline dumps and transports, destroying railroad lines, destroying individual trucks and small groups of vehicles and seizing documents found on them, burning armoured vehicles by means of incendiary grenades, killing enemy officers, and spreading rumours designed to induce panic among enemy troops (rumours concerning the appearance of Soviet tanks or airborne troops in their area).

7. In all areas still occupied by the Red Army, the NKVD (People's Commissariat of the Interior) and NKGB (People's Commissariat of State Security) offices are to organise destruction battalions to combat enemy airborne troops in our rear. If these areas are evacuated by the Red Army and occupied by the enemy, the destruction battalions must remain in the area and change over to partisan warfare.

8. Local district Party and Soviet offices and representatives of the NKVD and NKGB are fully responsible for organising destruction battalions and for converting them into partisan units.

It is categorically forbidden to disband destruction battalions. If they fragment or retreat to our rear area, the head of the above-mentioned offices will be brought to account before a War Tribunal.

9. The primary basis for the organisation of the partisan movement must be a mass formation of combat units and diversionary groups.

APPENDICES

Tactical Employment of Partisan Combat and Diversionary Detachments

Only bold and resolute actions by the partisan detachments will guarantee success and substantially assist the Red Army. The strength of partisans rests in their possession of the initiative and in their surprise operations.

The bases for partisan detachments' operations are the ambush and sudden, short raids on an objective, after which the detachment scatters into the night or early dawn when the vigilance of enemy guards slackens. An advance against an objective occurs only at night after the objective and the approach route has been reconnoitred in daylight.

If the raid's objective is guarded, one must quickly and noiselessly remove the guard (with ranger tactics) or bypass him. Partisans should not return fire.

After the raid, or if it failed, the partisans escape [enemy] pursuit and reunite at a previously arranged rendezvous 3 to 5 kilometres from the objective.

As a rule, while escaping from a pursuit, one must first take a false march direction. If the enemy pursues the detachment, a small group of the boldest partisans must be assigned the task of covering the main group's withdrawal. The covering group must withdraw in a false direction. If the pursuing units are foot soldiers, one must surprise them either by using the main group for a flank attack or by capturing and destroying the objective which has been denuded by the withdrawal of the enemy guards. Thus, the real mission will be fulfilled.

Partisan detachments and diversionary groups must extensively exploit local resources for their destructive activities in the enemy rear. For example, to demolish railway tracks, rails must be loosened with the help of a wrench that is available in every signalman's hut. To destroy communication lines, the poles should be sawn down.

Plain bottles filled with gasoline will be used to set fire to gasoline tanks or armoured cars (a bundle of rags or twigs soaked in an inflammable fluid are to be wrapped around the bottom of the bottle). During raids on parking areas for enemy motorised troops, the bottles will be thrown at the fuel tanks and motor vehicles. Placing a pyre [a heap of wood] on the rails can halt railroad trains. When the train has stopped, it is to be fired on from ambush, and soldiers climbing out will be destroyed by machine gun and rifle fire as well as by hand grenades. In the struggle against motorised units, raids will to be conducted against

resting areas at night, and the personnel as well as the gasoline supply [will be] destroyed.

In the fight against the enemy's air force, raids will be made against airfields, and aircraft will be destroyed on the ground. Groups of three to five men each will be formed of the best shots; they will approach the airport under cover and destroy low-flying planes landing and taking off from ambush. In addition to its tasks, areas of operation are to be established for the partisan detachments. These areas must include large forests to screen secret manoeuvres and hiding places.

Destruction of Traffic Routes and Means of Communication

The most substantial interference in rail and track transport is achieved by destroying bridges (blowing them up, undermining them, or burning them).

Small groups (three or four men) must be assigned to destroy the rails. Derailments must be carried out simultaneously along a series of rail sections, thus rendering repairs more difficult. Steep downgrades are to be selected as derailment sites, where the train moves at high speed and is more difficult to stop. Loosened rails must be removed from immediately in front of the train so that the engineer will not notice the damaged stretch. Three or four men (who sit in ambush) can do this by tying to the rails strong rope or telegraph wire, which can be obtained by destroying communication lines. If the railroad is double track, it is sufficient to derail one track since thereby both will be blocked. Simultaneously with the destruction of the rails, destroy the communication lines running alongside the railroad by cutting the wires after sawing down the poles. The more poles downed, the harder is the repair.

A good means of interference [with communications] is tying wires together. This is achieved by joining all wires on the pole by a thin, unobtrusive wire, the end of which leads down the pole and is buried.

Occupation and Destruction of Encampments

At all times, destroying gasoline and ammunition dumps takes priority. Usually these dumps are located far from inhabited areas, they are carefully guarded, and they have good communication links. For that reason, external communications must first be severed in order to occupy and destroy [the dumps].

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The following groups must be formed to occupy encampments:

- (a) A group to destroy external communications;
- (b) One or several groups with automatic weapons and grenades to cover the sector where enemy guards are located and to pin them down;
- (c) A few groups armed with hand grenades, gasoline bottles, and rifles to occupy [the camp] after destruction of the guards.

Raids are to be carried out only at night or at dawn. In sufficient time prior to a raid on a camp, daylight reconnaissance must obtain information on the position of guard posts and the guard room, on telephone and signal arrangements, and on concealed approaches to the camp and the guard posts. It is essential that, during daylight, group leaders acquaint themselves personally with the objective of the action.

After occupying the camp, immediate steps are to be taken to destroy it by setting fires at various places (by using gasoline bottles, by effectively shooting up gasoline tanks and cisterns with inflammable missiles, and by other means).

After completing the task, the detachment concentrates at a rendez-vous previously determined by the commander.

Ambushes and Raids in Combat against Live Enemy Targets

Partisan detachments have unlimited capability for carrying out sudden short raids from ambush on live enemy targets. Such raids engender panic in his ranks, induce him to flight, and create confusion among his units and subdivisions, whereby his further movement is held up, and serious personnel and material losses are inflicted [on him].

Partisan warfare can be especially effective against troop units marching at night. In most instances, large enemy units conduct their marches at night, when they are less threatened by aircraft. Night raids from ambush are best carried out simultaneously by several groups (platoons) with reinforced firing capabilities. Such groups can impede the advance of entire divisions and engender disorder.

Ambushes during raids are best established alongside roads. The best ambush [position] is the edge of a wood, 150–250 metres from the road, along which enemy movement is expected. Ambushes against live targets should not be established near a road because, after the first shots, enemy columns can attack the groups.

The region between the ambush and the road should be open so as to assure use of the total firepower of machine guns and rifles. Fire should be directed obliquely at the road and, preferably, by cross fire along the road. Each group must adhere to this firing system. It is a good idea to station on the flanks of the groups, 30-40 metres from the road, two or three skilled grenade-throwers who, after rifle fire against the column has begun, throw hand grenades at it.

The enemy's security patrols must not detect the ambush. This is achieved by arranging the ambushes 100-150 metres from the road and by [maintaining] absolute quiet within the group (at night the enemy usually sends out flank guards 50-100 metres from the road). In an ambush, smoking, movements in the group, talking, etc., are categorically forbidden. In the event of involuntary coughing, one must cover his mouth with his sleeve, cap, or something of the sort.

Firing attacks are to be carried out only against the main forces and not against forward security units and detachments. The latter must be permitted to pass by. In platoons, ambushes must be organised at intervals of 500-700 metres, and the firing attack is to begin simultaneously on the signal of the leader. The leader is positioned with the middle group or with the group which, depending on the direction of the enemy's advance, is closest to the enemy.

The opening of fire from the first machine gun in the leader's group can serve as the signal. During an ambush, no entrenchment is to be dug, since these can lead to discovery.

When time permits, material abandoned by the enemy must be destroyed. First, the vehicle motors are to be ruined by rifle shots. Horses used for horse-drawn guns must be shot. All light weapons (rifles, machine guns, munitions, as well as hand grenades) must be taken along for use in future combat. Surplus items are to be wrecked so that they cannot be used later.

At night it is relatively easy for partisan detachments to instigate a fight between two enemy columns, one against the other. To achieve this, small partisan groups between the two columns open fire simultaneously on both columns.

Operations against motorcycle riders, infantry transported on motor vehicles, or marching infantry can be especially effective. Small groups of three to five partisans, in ambush along the road at intervals of 100-150 metres, can inflict a serious defeat on the enemy, scatter his columns, and send them fleeing in panic.

For ambushes and raids against motor-vehicle columns select a

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section of the road with a high embankment or with ditches alongside the road. In all cases, partisans must attempt to erect roadblocks with felled trees, destroyed bridges, abandoned vehicles placed across the road, etc. These roadblocks will be useful only if ambushes are established in their vicinity (150–200 metres in the direction of the enemy) made up of one or two groups designated to fire on the enemy troops as they crowd together.

The partisan detachments and their groups must be mobile and not detectable by the enemy. To increase mobility, detachments and groups must rely only on captured vehicles and on those furnished by the population. Vehicles tie the detachment to roads and are more of a hindrance than help. Riding horses, even if unsaddled, are a good means of movement; but as a rule, mobility is best assured by training in rapid marching, tactical marches, and, especially, in night marching.

Paths in fields and forests are preferred for march movements. Inhabited areas must be avoided. It is better to march extra kilometres than to be discovered by the enemy.

March discipline must be strict. Smoking and conversations are forbidden at night.

When unexpected contact is made with the enemy at night, one should avoid opening fire and instead quickly escape from the enemy and change direction several times.

Two to three men are to be left behind for 20–30 minutes on the detachment's march route in order to learn whether or not the enemy or his agents are following its path. The latter [agents] are to be taken prisoner and executed.

For the sake of its own security, during the day the detachment or group dispatches two to three scouts 300–500 metres ahead; at night, 100–150 metres ahead. It is desirable to send these scouts on horseback; in this case, they are to be 1–1.5 kilometres ahead. To the rear, two scouts protect the detachments. In the column itself, observers conduct reconnaissance ahead and along the flanks. It is the detachment's duty to avoid unexpected contact with the enemy. If small groups of enemy are identified, they should be allowed to pass by, and the main force should be attacked from ambush. The foe is to be struck wherever he appears.

The well-prepared organisation of rest periods is one of the detachment's most important considerations when in the enemy rear. The enemy will attempt to take the detachment by surprise during its rest stops. Therefore, the detachments must always maintain constant combat readiness. The partisan detachment's particularly diverse and

tense work requires that it pay considerable attention to the problem of rest periods in order to preserve the partisan's strength.

The detachment commander's authority will be firm if the partisans perceive him as not only a valiant and bold fighter and a capable organiser of surprise raids on the enemy but also as a careful and solicitous leader.

As a rule, rest areas are in forests (and thickets), remote from roads and inhabited points, and, during the winter or especially rainy periods, in isolated buildings (woodsmen's huts, single farms, etc.). One should not remain in the same location for more than two successive days. Rest areas (hideouts) must be changed daily, if possible.

Immediately before arriving at a chosen rest area, the detachment (group) must make a distinct change of direction in its approach route and leave behind a listening post of two or three men in an ambush position to seize people who try to ferret out the detachment.

In the event an alarm is sounded while the unit is at rest, a rendezvous [site] is to be arranged ahead of time. The partisans rest with their weapons, and the commanders remain among their troops. The rest area is to be guarded closely on all sides by double outpost. If an inhabited region is chosen as a rest area, it must be enclosed on all sides by guards who do not let the inhabitants and detachment members enter or leave without special orders. Detachment troops are to be sheltered in houses and barns in compact groups along with their commanders. Commanders are not permitted to have separate quarters.

Consequently, rest areas must conform to the following requirements:

- (a) create the best rest conditions and remain unnoticed by the enemy from the ground and from the air;
- (b) insure good places exist for detecting unexpected raids by troops on foot;
- (c) upon receipt of an alarm, insure rapid assembly and the existence of assembly areas;
- (d) ensure the distance from large roads and inhabited regions is sufficiently great.

The partisan movement is a mass movement of all of the people. The partisan movement fragments, exhausts, and weakens enemy forces and facilitates advantageous conditions for Red Army counter-attacks. Partisan strength rests in their activeness [*aktivnost*], initiative, and boldness. Their principal modes of operation are sudden night raids from ambushes against enemy units in the rear area.

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The primary sources of supply for weaponry, ammunition, and provisions are loot taken from the enemy. Stores known only to a limited number of persons are to be created from surpluses in various hiding places.

Partisan detachments do not wait for assignment of tasks from above. [Instead], they operate independently in accordance with instructions from Comrade Stalin, the great leader of the people, to 'Create intolerable conditions for the enemy . . . Destroy him at every step, undermine all of his measures', in order to liberate our fatherland from foreign invasion.

ORDER OF THE COMMANDER OF THE CENTRAL HEADQUARTERS OF THE PARTISAN MOVEMENT NO. 0018, 1 AUGUST 1942

The Red Army, which is heroically fighting for its Fatherland, is tenaciously defending every inch of its Soviet soil and inflicting tremendous losses on the enemy in men and material. The enemy, who is bringing up reserves against us from areas in the distant rear and from other combat areas, continues to threaten the vital centres of our country.

Very many new enemy divisions, arriving from France, Belgium, Holland, and Germany, and equipped with artillery and tanks, are continuously unloading their equipment near the front line and are joining combat with the Red Army after passing undisturbed through thousands of kilometres because of the inactivity of individual partisan groups.

Hundreds of enemy trains and trucks are continuing to supply combat equipment, food, etc., in spite of the fact that our partisan forces exist everywhere.

Within the next few days, those portions of the Red Army which are heroically fighting at the front against an ever more ferocious enemy expect more assistance from partisan units operating in the enemy army's rear area. To all commanders of the Headquarters of the Partisan Movement on front staffs, to the commanders of operational groups on army staffs, and to all partisan unit commanders, commissars, and partisans who should be overcoming all obstacles and defying death, I ORDER:

(1) Fulfil our duty to our Fatherland, and fulfil all tasks that Comrade Stalin has assigned to the partisans. Increase partisan warfare in the rear

area of the German occupiers; disrupt the intelligence network, supply lines, and transportation system; destroy headquarters and technical equipment; and spare no bullets 'against the oppressors of our fatherland'.

(2) Immediately strike the strongest possible blows against enemy supply lines, and let no train with men, food, and technical supplies reach the front. Accomplish this by systematically organising the derailment of trains, demolitions, and fires according to plan. Strike continuous blows in the enemy rear area by positioning our own forces at the focal points of road and railroad communications.

(3) Do not be satisfied with demolishing tracks and derailing locomotives or parts of the train; it is absolutely necessary to destroy the crew. Thoroughly destroy locomotives, in particular, by blowing up, burning, or setting fire to the steam boilers with armour-piercing shells and by blowing up and burning the coal tenders [*Behaelter*]. Destroy the gasoline after shooting and killing the transport crew and railroad guards.

(4) Obstruct the enemy's supply system by destroying bridges, road junctions, railroad centres and equipment, food, and gasoline storage facilities.

(5) By all possible means, cease the procrastination and inactivity that still exists in some partisan groups. It is necessary to attack the enemy with the greatest possible energy. All partisan unit commanders and commissars are requested to recommend immediately for receipt of the highest State decoration and award any complete partisan unit that is responsible for a train derailment. If such a recommendation cannot be submitted immediately, documentary evidence of the heroic deed is to be retained and the recommendation is to be made later.

This order is to be announced to all partisan units.

On behalf of The Central Headquarters of the Partisan
Movement Commander P. Ponomarenko

Signed and authenticated

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AN INTELLIGENCE REPORT SUBMITTED BY THE '*TRINADTSAT*' (THIRTEENTH) PARTISAN REGIMENT COMMANDED BY SERGEI VLADIMIROVICH GRISHIN (MOGILEV DISTRICT, 7 SEPTEMBER 1943)

On 25 August, 500 infantry troops occupied a camp next to the airfield. A concentration camp adjoining the Dmitrov Factory contains about 500 people, including 276 Jews. A small troop-training area, which can accommodate about 1,500 men, is located behind the automobile repair shop, and there is another [training] area in Chapaev for about 1,000 men. A security regiment of the 'People's Army' is billeted on the grounds of an artillery regiment near the Mogilev No. 2 railroad station. This regiment is fighting against the partisans. Colonel Kononov commands this regiment. A pigeon station containing about 500 pigeons is located on the road to Vidrista. A vegetable storage area has been established adjoining the overpass near the railroad station. Locomotives are being repaired in the automobile repair shop. The meat combine is functioning, and the sausage department is located in the former newspaper building. Aircraft parts are being manufactured in the pipe foundry. There are about 1,000 troops in Mogilev, excluding those in the training areas. There are no armoured units. Anti-aircraft batteries are stationed on the bridges. At the present time, there are about 500 motor vehicles in Mogilev.

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This book relies primarily on source materials published in the republics of the former Soviet Union, many of which now form part of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and on numerous sources published in the West, primarily in the United States, Great Britain, and Germany. These sources were published between the 1940s and the present day. The author has also obtained access to many archival materials located in Moscow, Kiev, and Minsk, primarily materials found in the National Archives of the main republics where partisan fighting took place on a large scale. Many of the archival materials dealing with the Soviet Partisan Movement and associated NKVD intelligence activities have never before been published.

The memoirs of such well-known partisan commanders and organisers as Fedorov, Machul'sky, Lobanok, and others have provided essential background materials related to the general nature of partisan warfare in the German-occupied territory of the Soviet Union. For ease of use, I have subdivided this bibliography into two main parts; specifically, into works published in the West and those published in Eastern Europe.

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